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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the involvement of further education (FE) colleges in England and Wales in economic development and presents case studies of good practice in nine FE colleges. Chapter 1 addresses FE's role in economic development and measuring and planning economic growth. Chapter 2 contains the case studies: Lewisham College's Action for Better Lewisham Employees initiative, a strategic public sector employer partnership that contributes to the area's socioeconomic regeneration; Highbury College's support of transition from the armed forces to civilian life and from school to work; Doncaster College's role as a service provider to British Aerospace; Milton Keynes College's development of logistics training; Pembrokeshire College's regeneration activities related to marine and sea-fishing industries; positive effects on the local economy of Lewisham and Dearne Valley College's new purpose-built buildings; contribution to economic development of Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College; Darlington College's active role in developing social and economic partnerships; and Gateshead College's proactive approach to secure a role in economic development through membership on local planning forums. Chapter 3 offers messages for moving forward categorized into employment, enterprise, regeneration, regional strategic planning, and developing college capacity. Appendixes contain 10 references, 15-item bibliography, and list of acronyms. (YLB)

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Beyond responsiveness:

promoting good practice in economic development

Maria Hughes and Photoula Kypri

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Furthering Local Economies

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

Beyond responsiveness:
promoting good practice in economic development

Maria Hughes and Photoula Kypri

FE matters

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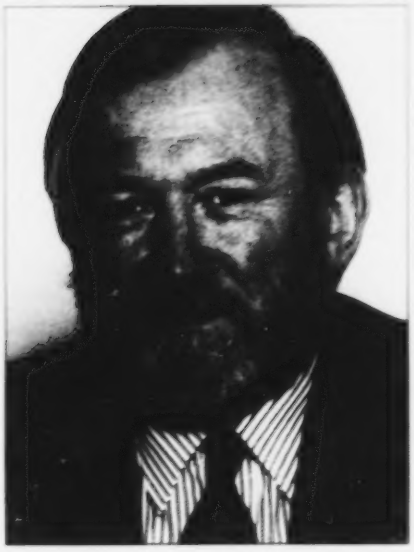
Foreword



Britain, it is said, has a five-year 'window of opportunity' to make the most of the recent high technology inward investment. For example, the UK has become a magnet for semiconductor and advanced electronic manufacturers who are attracted by the people of these islands. Investment decisions begin with people and the skills they can bring to industry.

The British are flexible and adapt quickly to change. However, we face a critical skills gap between the requirements of new manufacturing and the way in which our people have been trained for work.

Employers from all industry sectors state that they are disappointed by the general levels of numeracy and literacy of the workforce, but, more importantly, they find that people lack the communication and teamworking skills needed for the modern workplace.

It has become only too apparent to me, as chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce taskforce into the skills crisis, that we have to act quickly to plug this gap.

We need to be a nation committed to a lifetime of learning, making sure our educational institutions respond to demands for an ever-increasing variety of courses and requirements for knowledge. We must have lightning quick reactions to a technological world that often appears itself to be changing at the speed of light. In a world where seemingly the only constant is change, we must adapt to survive.

I believe this paper makes a timely intervention into this debate and points towards progress on developing regional and national strategies to educate and empower our people for the next millennium of work.

Llew Aviss
President of the North-east Chamber of Commerce

1 Regional development: background and context

Regionalisation

The 442 colleges in England and Wales (those receiving funding from the Further Education Funding Council [FEFC]) are the most important source of human resource development in the post-compulsory education and training sector. They provide a vast range of learning opportunities for individuals, businesses and those in industry. They are active in a spectrum of partnership arrangements with the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Labour Government's manifesto included a commitment to co-ordinate regional economic development, which would underpin wider regeneration.

In December 1997, the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), published the White Paper on the regions in England, *Building Partnerships for Prosperity*. This outlines the Government's proposals for setting up regional development agencies (RDAs) in England, building upon the establishment of the Welsh Development Agency and the Scottish Enterprise. It is presented as the first step towards greater devolution in England.

The White Paper makes a commitment to giving London a city-wide strategic authority with a mayor and an assembly. Subject to approval from a referendum in May 1998 and from Parliament, the Greater London Authority (GLA) will become operational in 2000; RDAs are expected to be operational from 1 April 1999.

The RDAs for England have five specific objectives. These are to:

- encourage economic development and social and physical regeneration
- co-ordinate business support, investment and competitiveness
- enhance skills
- promote employment
- promote sustainable development.

They are therefore responsible for co-ordinating:

- regeneration, including the spending of the Single Regeneration Budget and European Structural Funds
- business support
- training and other labour market activities, such as 'back-to work' programmes, careers advice, and ensuring FE programmes reflect the needs of the labour market
- tourism promotion.

The boundaries of the regions will be based upon the existing Government Offices for the regions, which integrate the regional offices and the delivery of programmes from the Departments for Education and Employment (DfEE), Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), and Trade and Industry (DTI), as well as programmes from other departments. The exception will be that the RDA of the north-west will include Merseyside.

An important consideration will be how the co-ordinating role of RDAs will operate in relation to other regional bodies, including the training and enterprise councils (TECs), regional development organisations (RDOs), the FEFC, local authorities and Government Offices. The White Paper includes mechanisms to govern the relationship between RDAs and the Government, and measures to ensure accountability.

Further education colleges contribute to economic development, not only as service providers of education and training, but as stakeholders or employers and purchasers of goods and services in the region, and as a strategic partner playing a key role in business development and economic regeneration. The wider role of human resource development (HRD) in regional development must be understood and colleges should be involved in the policy and planning for RDAs as major providers of HRD.

This paper looks at the picture which has emerged from FEDA's 1997 survey of the sector's involvement in economic development, reported in *Investing partners: further education, economic development and regional policy* (James and Clark, 1997). It presents case studies of good practice in nine FE colleges, and uses these to draw out key messages for the sector on the important role it can play in economic regeneration. Because it looks at the strategic role of colleges, it should be of interest not just to college chief executives and senior managers but also to their strategic partners. It is one of a series of publications in FEDA's research on the sector's role in economic development.

FE'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What is economic development?

In its 'Furthering Local Economies' strategic research, FEDA defines economic development as:

> *the range of activities pursued at the local, regional or national level with the intention of improving the growth and distribution of economic opportunity, and the capacity to enhance it, for individuals, enterprises and industries within defined geographical areas, communities and sectors.*
>
> *(James and Clark, 1997)*

These activities may involve a range of regeneration objectives including environmental enhancement, skills development, technology transfer, enterprise development, enhancement of transport infrastructure and town centre management. Some have sought to define economic development as processes which focus on employing, purchasing, developing and relocating to improve productivity and profitability. Others have focused on economic development as 'outcomes' measurable through tangible results. What is clear is that the FE sector has a primary role to play in all aspects of local and regional regeneration activity.

Role of FE

As a sector, FE provides education and training for more than 3.5 million learners, employs more than 200,000 full-time education staff, has a government budget of more than £3.2 billion and works with TECs, the public and private sectors on specific contracts (FEFC, 1997a and FEDA, 1995). In many regions, the FE college is one of the top five largest employers in the region – this is just one of the findings of the FEDA survey, reported on in James and Clark, 1997, on the sector's involvement in local and regional development.

Colleges are local consumers, purchasing a wide range of local professional services and perishable and consumer goods. In the survey, the majority of colleges judged the value of their local purchasing to be between £151,000–£500,000. The sector's primary trading activity was consultancy.

Survey responses indicated that colleges accessed a range of sources of funding, other than that received from the FEFC. The most common of these were TEC development funds, followed by the European Social Fund (ESF), TEC programme funds, Competitiveness Funds and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB).

The sector's key roles were perceived as:

- providing skill development, to help the labour force, including the unemployed, to acquire higher levels of skill
- helping learners to gain employment by supporting the unemployed to access jobs and human resource development
- working with small firms through consultancy, staff and management training
- enhancing leisure, tourism and cultural industries.

The potential offering of the further education sector is broad. It can:

- contribute to the local, sub-regional, and regional economic strategies
- enhance the skills and employability of the potential and actual workforce
- raise the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to become and remain competitive in the global marketplace
- behave as an exemplar local employer.

In the reality of the 'knowledge economy', where the capacity for creativity, communication, flexibility, information technology (IT) literacy and team-working are the key determinants of success, FE plays a primary role.

Colleges can contribute to economic regeneration in four ways, by:

- raising achievement of individuals across diverse socio-economic areas
- providing a diverse range of vocational qualifications
- working with employers, local government, schools, higher education providers and the voluntary sector to develop partnership programmes
- underpinning social regeneration by supporting community development.

The new political context, within which colleges are now operating, places greater emphasis on co-operation and partnership within emerging new planning structures. The sector's role in meeting public policy objectives can be defined under four aspects of economic development:

- employment:
  - ensuring labour market responsiveness
  - raising skill levels and individual achievements
  - providing the 'knowledge economy'
- enterprise:
  - supporting SMEs
  - being involved in supply chain development and brokerage
  - establishing partnerships for enterprise
- regeneration:
  - with FE as a stakeholder, alongside employers, purchasers, developers and landowners
  - ensuring long-term skill enhancement
  - establishing FE centres of excellence to anchor major regeneration initiatives
- regional strategic planning:
  - contributing to the work of RDAs
  - playing a role in regional and sub-regional forums
  - taking a primary role in planning education and training infrastructure.

Measuring and planning economic growth

A report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Employment outlook* (July 1997), states that GDP growth in the UK is likely to average 3% in 1997 and 2.7% in 1998. This is seen as robust economic growth and ahead of other European economies. There is a projected fall in unemployment from 7.4% in 1996 to 6.1% in 1997 and 5.6% in 1998. Figures from the spring 1997 *Labour force survey* (LFS), published by the DETR, indicate unemployment falling by 20–35,000 a month. College involvement in the Government's New Deal initiative (which involves four main options to help the jobless back into employment) will be vital to develop local strategies for dealing with long-term unemployment among the 25-plus age group and youth unemployment among the 18–24 cohort.

The LFS also confirms rising employment levels. In the quarter to spring 1997, the seasonally-adjusted number of those in the UK in employment rose by 91,000 to 26,076,000. The number of employees in the manufacturing industries is reported to have risen by 3,000 in June 1997. Employment in manufacturing rose by 25,000 during the year, with the total number of employees in June 1997 being 3,944,000. Colleges' involvement in delivering Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), National Traineeships and higher skill development for sector-specific employees has been central in raising employment levels.

Set within this context, the sector's national potential to support economic growth looks positive. However, there are clear differences in the economic prosperity of the regions. As the case studies show, many areas have experienced the collapse of their dominant industry. Ensuring that economic growth affects all localities is a major challenge for national policy-makers and partners in the regions. Funds will need to be targeted carefully to recognise regional differences. The Department of Trade and Industry's consultation document on *Regional competitiveness indicators* (DTI, summer 1997) identified five main areas for developing regional indicators: overall competition; labour market; education and training; capital; land and infrastructure.

How should colleges be involved?

The FE sector will need to play a major part in defining the education and training indicators and the shape of future RDAs. Research by FEDA has provided a useful set of categories to describe the three key roles which colleges can play in economic regeneration:

- As a **service provider**, colleges develop skills for the future: through 16–19 education and training, and to meet current demands by up-skilling the existing workforce. The FE sector is the single largest provider of skills updating, so is able to prepare local people for new economic roles and opportunities. This support can play a key role in helping to start up new businesses and turn a small firm into a medium-sized one.
- Colleges may also play an important **stakeholder role**. Often, FE institutions, along with the local authority, remain the largest single employer and a base from which new employment or temporary work may grow.
- Further education colleges can link with other sectors to create **strategic partnerships** for change, inward investment and local growth and development.

All three roles are of equal importance in furthering local economies. In practice, many activities in which colleges are involved include features of more than one of these categories. For example, a major college building programme provides employment for local people and better facilities for state-of-the-art training, which may in turn attract inward investors.

However, involvement of the FE sector in such activity may be accidental rather than planned. Colleges often have actively to seek involvement rather than being there by right. Being excluded from the strategic partnership role has many repercussions, both on the extent to which colleges are seen to be responsive to new demands, and on the appropriateness and viability of decisions which may later impinge on training provision.

This lack of connection between the development of strategy and its implications has limited the effectiveness of planning and decision-making. Colleges could bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, borne out of many decades of having to operationalise ill thought-out strategies, which could help to ensure that economic development strategies are relevant and achievable.

The exclusion of FE representatives from the planning process may be related to image rather than track record. The case studies which follow demonstrate that colleges *are* playing an effective part in furthering local economies. However, the problem is that there is little public acknowledgement of what they are doing.

A further problem may be related to the reputation of colleges that attempt to play a leading role and do not deliver, or to those that are unwilling to be sufficiently flexible to meet newly-emerging needs. Other key strategic partners will not necessarily distinguish between institutions. As a result, the reputation of the sector as a whole is diminished.

There is undoubtedly potential for colleges to put significant effort into becoming a leading player in economic development. However, they need to ensure that the central tenet of their mission – to provide high quality and accessible learning opportunities to meet a diverse range of needs – does not become subsumed by a desire to overplay their strategic or stakeholder role. This is a particularly tempting trap at a time of financial stringency when efforts to utilise college resources may jeopardise curriculum concerns.

The case studies demonstrate that the vital role of human resource development is increasingly acknowledged as a key factor in economic development. Colleges should not view their significant contribution to HRD as a second order priority. The case studies represent a raft of activities of a similar nature being undertaken by colleges across the country. However, the current situation is not perfect. There is a great deal to be done to change the image of the college while at the same time developing its capacity to deliver.

This paper also provides key messages which could form an action checklist for colleges wishing to develop their strategic role in economic regeneration. To assist colleges further in this process, FEDA is developing an audit tool.

Current state of play

Research undertaken by FEDA into the impact of colleges on their local economic profile revealed the significant contribution that FE colleges are making (James and Clark, 1997). This was evident across all three categories: as service provider, stakeholder and strategic partner. Relations with local businesses are a critical dimension of college work. However, the activities in which colleges are engaged tend to be disparate rather than contributions to a coherent local or regional development plan. In part, this may be because colleges are seen as second-order players in strategic developments. It perhaps also reflects the absence of any systematic, national or regional planning processes for economic development. Initiatives may compete against each other rather than build a synergy between them. The case studies illustrate the significant local development taking place through key players in localised areas. They also demonstrate the diversity among different areas.

Summary of the case studies

The case studies that follow, written by key players in their implementation, describe a range of initiatives and examine their impact on the local economy.

Lewisham College

The work undertaken by Lewisham College demonstrates the immediate and longer-term benefits of a major new building programme and the key role colleges can play in regenerating an area. The Action for Better Lewisham Employees (ABLE) initiative is a strategic public sector employer partnership set up by the college to contribute to the socio-economic regeneration of the area through enhancing the skills and capabilities of local employees.

Highbury College

Colleges play a key role in the transitional phases of individuals' lives. Highbury College demonstrates the key role FE institutions can play in developing new skills through Modern Apprenticeships. The focus is also on its achievements in up-skilling workers moving from the defence industry to civilian life.

Doncaster College

Doncaster College's business school illustrates how FE institutions can work with major employers, such as British Aerospace, to provide high-level human resource development.

Milton Keynes College

The leading role that colleges can play in meeting the new training needs emerging from advances in technology is illustrated in Milton Keynes College's development of logistics training.

Pembrokeshire College

Pembrokeshire College used its expertise as a training provider to develop new skills required by a regeneration scheme. This had a significant impact on local job opportunities and supported the development of many small enterprises. By providing relevant and timely skills-development programmes, the college made a significant contribution to the area's capacity to regenerate itself from within.

Dearne Valley College

Dearne Valley College's new building created a high level of interest from the public and from local SMEs, resulting in an enhanced image of further education and increasing the take-up of many training opportunities.

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College

FEDA's research (James and Clark, 1997) indicated that sixth-form colleges may engage in fewer additional activities related to economic development than other FE providers. The case study provided by Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College describes the substantial contribution that may, nevertheless, be provided by such colleges.

Darlington College

At a time of local government reorganisation, Darlington College took an active role in helping to set the agenda with other major partners to determine key economic and social objectives for the new unitary authority.

Gateshead College

Many colleges are making a conscious decision to reposition themselves as key players in furthering their local economies. The case study from Gateshead College shows what may need to be achieved to win this recognition.

2 Responsiveness in action: the case studies

EMPLOYMENT

Lewisham College: Raising skill levels of public sector employees

Chris Jude of Lewisham College describes the strategic partnership initiated by the college with local public sector chief executives in the local council, health service and metropolitan police. Through the initiative, the partners are developing a culture of lifelong learning in the Lewisham area by encouraging the take-up of work-related and non-work-related education and training. This learning enhances the human resource potential of the area.

Lewisham ABLE initiative

The ABLE initiative is a strategic public sector employer partnership set up by Lewisham College to contribute to the socio-economic regeneration of the area. It does this by:

- focusing on the education and training needs of public sector employees – the public sector constitutes the main employment base in the area; many of the workforce live locally
- enhancing public sector employees' current and future employability – through ABLE, the college offers FEFC-funded national qualifications free to public sector employees; SOLOTEC (South London Training and Enterprise Council) offers assistance with exam and registration fees
- positioning public sector employees to contribute to and benefit from the socio-economic regeneration activities planned for Lewisham – ABLE seeks to ensure that local employees and residents, whether continuing in their current employment or not, are qualified and confident to lead and participate in change and are not dependent upon any one job or form of employment locally.

The ABLE initiative encourages employees to assume responsibility for their education and training by taking courses in their own time. It also helps public sector employers to realise their organisational development needs through planned group or infill provision. This frees up their training budgets enabling them to purchase customised provision. In return, the partner employers will offer the college first option in delivering this provision.

Public sector employers involved in ABLE include:

- London Borough of Lewisham
- Lewisham and Guy's Mental Health NHS Trust
- Optimum Health Services
- Lewisham Hospital
- Catford and Lewisham Divisions of the Metropolitan Police

The initiative is the college's response to realising the aims of the Lewisham Public Sector Management Forum set up by Barry Quirk, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Lewisham. The forum aims to:

- create an enhanced planning capability among public sector partners
- secure a more judicious use of public sector resources
- explore mutually beneficial personnel development strategies.

ABLE is a response to two local economic situations:

- the increasing prosperity and employment opportunities which will be generated through Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and millennium funding and the private and public sector inward investment which will result from it, and from the extension of the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and the Jubilee Line to the Lewisham area
- the anticipated, continuing reduction in public sector funding, which will impact disproportionately on the unskilled and semi-skilled workforce, most of whom live in Lewisham; this will add to the already high socio-economic cost of unemployment in the area, particularly among young black males but increasingly among the unskilled white working class.

Public sector employees develop skills to enhance their employability, at the same time improving the human resource potential of the area

The initiative aims to support public sector employees to:

- become better qualified to take advantage of employment opportunities resulting from regeneration activities
- meet the future skill demands of the organisation for which they work
- qualify or retrain for new employment wherever it is offered
- learn what they want to learn as well as what their employers want them to learn
- become more mobile and better equipped to compete for employment
- be less dependent upon their current employment
- most importantly, be more confident to face an uncertain future.

The extent to which these aims are being realised is best judged by the response to the offer, to date. For example, the four Employees' Fairs which the college has held with its employer partners, attracted more than 1,000 people. About 50% of those attending have made course applications. These are all applications from employees who will be studying in their own time. Their choice of courses include self-employment courses, construction, catering, A-levels, art, sound engineering, languages and motor vehicle repair as well as more obviously employment-related courses such as computing, counselling, sign language and management. This contrasts with the choices made by the employers when planning courses to meet their identified organisational needs, which typically include the Certificate in Management Studies (CMS), computing, customer care, business administration, housing and counselling.

The longer-term outcomes of ABLE will be ascertained through assessing management data from tracking students as individuals and by organisation and through evaluations by the employer partners using, for example, development review summaries and reports on the National Targets for Education and Training (NTETs).

From initiative to action

Meetings were held with the chief executives of each partner organisation to introduce the initiative and explain what ABLE had to offer. At these meetings contributions were sought from partners, such as study time or staff secondments and their support so that ABLE could work 'top-down' through their organisations. An ABLE briefing pack was developed to assist this process.

Meetings were then held with training or personnel managers to plan how ABLE would be introduced to employees. It was decided that each organisation would hold an Employees' Fair to be launched by the chief executives and at which each curriculum area offered by the college would be represented.

It was agreed that employees would be advised and counselled about their choice of course and should be able to apply to the course of their choice. The college also agreed to contact applicants within a week of application with a date for interview and assessment. Once accepted on the course, applicants could then enrol providing they produced evidence of eligibility, the criteria being that they were a member of staff at one of the participating organisations, either full or part-time or on a short-time contract of one year or more. The purpose, aims and outcomes were then agreed for each event. A 'Welcome and Next Steps' letter was given to employees together with an event evaluation form. Staff running the event were given guidance on the eligibility criteria and procedures for enrolment.

Posters and 1,000 leaflets were displayed in each organisation to promote ABLE and the Employees' Fair to employees. The Director of Lifelong Learning held weekly meetings with police officers in each division and partners jointly arranged for external and internal press promotion and coverage of the events. The college also developed a 'Quality commitment' to its partners. This included a 24-hour ABLE contact number. The ABLE Initiative was then formally launched on 25 June 1997 by Sir Michael Heron of the Post Office and John Monks, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The aims of the launch were to promote the notion of employer-employee-education social partnerships and to endorse the lifelong learning commitment of which ABLE is a model.

As with all initiatives, ABLE has stimulated system development and opportunities for reviewing both systems and procedures from the perspective of new client groups. Many procedures have been streamlined as a result. Although unanticipated, ABLE has produced a considerable exchange of resources, both intellectual and material, between the partner organisations. The model has been so successful that the college is now promoting intellectual bartering as the theme of an employers' video. The idea is that the college will offer education and training services in exchange for resources which the employer can provide and the college requires.

Issues

Ownership of ABLE has been secured through the participative way in which the initiative has been developed and because each of the partners has an interest in making it work. It could be argued that the college, as holder of the resource, is the most powerful of the partners. However, this would misrepresent the purpose and aims of the Lewisham Public Sector Management Forum which extend beyond the ABLE partnership. As public sector service providers, each organisation is inextricably linked in terms of role and by virtue of the range of activities through which its responsibilities are delivered and for which co-operation is essential. An analogy would be the relationship of several large companies to their subsidiaries.

The notion of mutual benefit, which informed the partnership at the outset, has become more apparent as the perceived benefits have been realised and extended beyond those anticipated. The initiative has been used to promote innovative models of working and of exchanging and combining resources. Quality controls have been built into it. Documentary accounts of the college's quality commitments to its partners and their employees are outlined in the ABLE 'Accord' and 'Quality commitment' documents. Resourcing for the initiative has come mainly from partners' existing budgets and through an exchange of resources. Additional resourcing has been secured through a bid to SOLOTEC, a gift from The Post Office and from FEDA project income.

More than 700 people, 50% of whom are women, have now enrolled on the ABLE initiative. Retention rates are high at 91%. There is a far higher take-up by black and ethnic minority employees than is reflected by their numbers in the workforce. For example, 30% of the workforce of the London Borough of Lewisham is black, while take-up on ABLE is now more than 50%. The average age of ABLE students is 38 while for non-ABLE students it is 28. The college is also working with UNISON to develop an entry level basic skills course for manual workers as part of UNISON's national 'Return to learn' programme. The aim of the course is to widen and increase participation by manual workers. 'Return to learn' students will receive educational leave to attend. In September 1997, the college set up the Trade Union Education Centre which offers TUC courses and, together with 'Return to learn', offers a range of access points to the ABLE programme.

Benefits

Individuals have benefited from:

- free access to courses leading to national qualifications
- education services provided at their workplace
- their employers, the college and SOLOTEC working in partnership to improve education and employment prospects.

The college has benefited from:

- initiating and contributing to a strategy which supports local public sector organisations and the employment prospects of the current and potential workforce
- the opportunity to review its current 'curriculum fit' for a new client group and to plan to meet the needs of that group
- diversifying its intake and enriching the mix of its students – this may result in the improved motivation and achievement of all students
- gaining a range of resources in return for the ABLE offer
- entering the lifelong learning arena on a scale which has highlighted the need for current and future systems development and service provision for employed people both locally and nationally.

Employers have benefited from:

- better utilisation of their training budgets enabling them to meet their organisational needs through buying customised provision
- their employees' participation in education on an unprecedented scale and across a range of qualification courses
- the nurturing of the learning culture of their organisation to meet their NTETs
- having more satisfied and fulfilled employees
- contributing to the planning and delivery of college courses
- having access to participation, retention and achievement statistics which enable them to better plan their future organisational development needs.

The local economy and skills base have benefited as a result of the initiative because:

- the human resource potential of the area is being enhanced
- new energy and confidence is being cultivated within the workforce
- key employers are working as partners and acting in synergy.

The economy has benefited because ABLE takes into account the:

- local and regional economic agenda
- current and future requirements of public sector employers and their employees
- imperative of social inclusiveness which is the mainspring of sustainable local prosperity and economic growth.

Views of partners

If as organisations and individuals we are to respond to this [huge change] we need to be flexible. Flexibility requires a degree of confidence, knowledge, a desire to learn new and different things, ie it requires organisations and individuals to be ABLE.

Annie Brough, Chief Executive, Optimum Health Services

It's wonderful – you can take a course, do something stimulating and have the backing of your employer – what could be better?

Sue Corrigan, Health Administrator, on NVQ Level 3 Business Administration

I love finding out what computers can do for you. When I used to work with them, I just used them for invoicing, credit control and letters which was very limited. I'd like to learn accounting eventually.

Carol Cummins, ex sales ledger clerk, now school meals assistant, would-be accounts clerk

ABLE ... is a creative approach to expanding opportunities within restricted budgets. It will be successful because of the belief in its success by the college and the partners... A model scheme ... and innovative concept of intellectual bartering.

General Secretary of the TUC, John Monks, speaking at the ABLE launch

We are happy to accept the notion that no employee can expect a job for life ... but we now have to accept that the employee should expect a training for life. We should accept that responsibility, not as a sop to our consciences but as a commercial response to a commercial challenge.

Sir Michael Heron, the Post Office, speaking at the ABLE launch

The college has a good reputation in the community and with its public sector management partners. ABLE has opened up the college to employees which has made them open to lifelong learning. As a result of the scale of the initiative and the nature of the college's contribution, ABLE and Lewisham College are known and appreciated in a very different way.

Highbury College: Ensuring labour market responsiveness

Supporting transition

FE colleges support people in transition from one phase of their life to another. In the two case studies that follow, Hilary Skarratt and Fay Deakin describe how Highbury College is supporting transition from the armed forces to civilian life and from school to work.

The college

Highbury College of Further Education is one of the largest FE colleges in the UK. It is based in the north of Portsmouth and employs more than 700 staff. Highbury attracts nearly 1,500 full-time and part-time students locally, nationally and internationally. It is based on three sites: the main campus to the north of the city; the Unicorn Centre which houses most of the construction facilities, and Cosham Park House, from which many of its adult education courses are run.

Industry in the area

Employment in Portsmouth is concentrated within the sectors of public administration and defence, business and property services, hotels and catering and manufacturing. Projected employment growth is lower than the rest of the county owing to defence cuts, effects of recession and contracting-out of non-core activities.

Specialist areas

Funding related to the Millennium Commission for the redevelopment of Portsmouth Harbour will provide a significant boost for the economy. It is anticipated that construction and related trades will be the first sector to benefit followed by jobs in tourism, leisure and associated industries once the reconstruction is completed. The college has ensured that it is well placed to meet the related training requirements, having, for example, made a commitment to retain its extensive construction facilities throughout the recession.

The college has many areas of specialism which offer some of the finest facilities in the country. One of these is the School of Motor Vehicle, recently refurbished and extended to offer one of the largest training workshops in the UK. Industry-standard facilities now include body repair workshops, a spraying booth and MOT testing bay. Together they allow the college to provide specialist training at all levels from craft to management.

Working with the marines

As a maritime city, Portsmouth's economy has always been inextricably linked to the defence industry. Highbury College has for many years worked to develop training links with the Royal Navy and currently operates a number of initiatives with them, including the introduction of civilian qualifications and accreditation of prior learning (APL).

The Royal Marines use the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (SEME) in Bordon, Hampshire, for all of their technical trade training. A Ministry of Defence initiative identified that a number of service personnel approaching the end of their service career did not possess a recognised qualification that reflected the skills acquired during their service career and that would be needed to find relevant employment in civilian life.

Class 1 mechanics, with a cross-section of experience from a variety of trades within the Royal Marines, had all undertaken a six to seven month full-time apprenticeship at SEME and earned City and Guilds qualifications. Of those, a number had returned to SEME for further training and had progressed to become senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs). However, despite the training, experience and qualifications of both of these groups of staff, it was clear that the gap was widening between these and civilian-recognised vocational qualifications.

Besides bridging this gap for existing staff, the Royal Marines were also looking to establish systems to incorporate National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) into the training of all recruits to prepare them for their return to civilian life. They investigated how existing training and experience might be recognised and equivalent civilian qualifications incorporated into future training. They approached Highbury both as a result of recommendations received from the industry, and because the college had experience of working with the Royal Navy on a number of other projects.

As the officer in charge, Warrant Officer Ward, explained:

> *Highbury College's School of Motor Vehicle has an excellent reputation among the motor trade. It was very encouraging to speak to someone from the industry with the background knowledge to understand and help us achieve our training objectives. Highbury staff have been welcoming, helpful and reassuring throughout the project.*

Mapping skills across qualifications

Following a meeting with the Royal Marines' Educational Unit, college staff analysed the Royal Marines' extensive training manuals to investigate the extent to which existing qualifications might be mapped against equivalent NVQ requirements. This mapping indicated that no additional training would be necessary and the college began to convert existing qualifications to NVQs through APL. A customised package was developed. Highbury staff worked directly with the Royal Marines to give Class 1 mechanics a one-day introduction to the portfolio, two to three days' support during the ensuing period of evidence-collection, and final assessment of the candidate's portfolio. A hotline was established direct to Highbury's School of Motor Vehicle.

Highbury provided a similar service for senior NCOs converting existing experience and qualifications to NVQ Management at Level 4 and 5.

To help the Royal Marines with their longer-term aim of establishing a culture of training for both service and civilian life, Highbury also trained a network of Royal Marine staff to carry out in-house assessment of evidence.

Quality assurance and maintaining standards were important aspects for the Royal Marines when introducing new qualifications. The assessor training proved a useful way to give key personnel at different ranks an insight into the overall NVQ system, and in particular its application within their area of responsibility.

Ongoing quality control was maintained through a number of internal verifiers employed by Highbury College specifically to handle this project. Warrant Officer Ward carried out a similar role within the Royal Marines, and is the main point of contact between Highbury and the staff.

Results to date

Results from a pilot carried out among a cohort of mechanical and management candidates were excellent and the project is now up and running. More than 40 candidates have gone through the process to date, with a further 50 planned.

Although Highbury handles the administration on behalf of the Royal Marines, the level of paperwork is higher than originally foreseen. Yet, says Warrant Officer Ward:

> *Despite this, we are hoping that by keeping additional systems to a minimum, the paperwork and continual assessments will become part of the training ethos within the workshops, rather than being seen as a bolt-on. NVQ qualifications will become a normal part of what each member of staff strives towards and part of the preparation for a future career in the motor industry.*

Highbury College helps Royal Marines achieve qualifications for their mechanic skills

Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships have the potential to be extremely effective in developing the skills needed for the new millennium, but their success is dependent upon close collaboration between employers and training providers.

Highbury College has a long-term commitment to working with its local TEC and has developed a close working relationship with staff there. This was further enhanced during 1995 when Highbury formed its own training agency – Highbury Training – to become a designated supplier for Hampshire TEC's New Horizons and Modern Apprenticeship programmes. As one of the largest colleges in the south, Highbury was able to introduce MAs across a range of course areas, from engineering and motor vehicles, accounting and business administration, through to hairdressing.

Promoting Modern Apprenticeships

Communicating the key benefits and features of MAs to employer sponsors and trainees is fundamental to their success. Besides the marketing activities undertaken by Hampshire TEC, Highbury also produced promotional materials and held events to explain the concept of Modern Apprenticeships to employers, potential trainees and their parents. Further profile-raising continues through advertising, public relations (PR) and schools liaison activities.

Highbury Training matching service

The considerable interest in the college's MA programme came from employers keen to get involved but who lacked suitable trainees and from potential trainees who lacked a sponsoring employer. It soon became clear that if Modern Apprenticeships were to take off, a matching service was required.

A member of staff was designated to operate a recruitment service. As enquiries are received, waiting lists of potential employers and trainees are reviewed for suitability. If no suitable matches are immediately available then other relevant employers may be contacted. Alternatively, sources of potential trainees might be the local careers offices or college course tutors as relevant courses come to an end.

Systems and procedures

A team of staff was recruited to handle the employer, trainee and Hampshire TEC liaison and the considerable amount of extra work critical to administering the programme. This team now comprises a business services manager, Fay Deakin, two business development executives and two administrators. Fay Deakin explains how the team works:

> *Part of the role of the Business Development Executive is to liaise with employers, to discuss the ways in which Modern Apprenticeships can benefit them and to explain to them the role of Highbury Training as the training supplier. If the organisation has suitable trainees, then they will be interviewed by the Business Development Executive and the relevant lecturers. The Business Development Executive then works with the lecturer and the employer to develop a training plan to ensure that the needs of both the apprentice and employer are met, and that clear training targets and schedules are established and agreed. Following a Health and Safety check, again carried out by our central team, the Business Development Executive will visit the company to sign up the trainees on to the programme.*

Lecturing staff, who are also trained assessors, will then visit the trainee back at the workplace for regular work-based assessments.

Introducing MAs to the engineering Industry

Highbury currently provides Modern Apprenticeship training to 17 engineering and related companies in Portsmouth and the surrounding areas. At present, Matra Marconi of Portsmouth has 18 modern apprentices at Highbury Training, who attend the college on a full-time basis for the first year, followed by day or block release training for the second and third years. Matra Marconi personnel staff and Highbury College lecturers are together recruiting a further 27 apprentices. Phil Smith, Manufacturing Training Manager at Matra Marconi, says:

> *When we heard about Modern Apprenticeships they seemed to be just the sort of training we were looking for with a good combination of off-site training and work-based assessment. Initial discussions with Highbury in developing a training plan and ongoing contact via assessments and review meetings have meant that the needs of both our organisation and our apprentices have been met.*

He also welcomes the project management aspect of the Highbury service:

> *The administrative workload involved with our apprentices would almost certainly require additional resources. The fact that Highbury College handles the complete project has meant that the whole programme runs very smoothly. The quality systems they have in place and the weekly reviews we hold with Highbury mean that we can monitor the progress of each of our modern apprentices while they are at college, and remain involved in the development of their training.*

Issues faced

Systems

While systems had been set in place to handle enquiries, demand from potential trainees and sponsoring employers in the initial stages was far higher than expected. This meant that systems and resources needed to be constantly monitored, reviewed and updated to ensure that the quality of service was maintained.

Staff skills

It also became clear that many employers, who may have been disillusioned about other training schemes in the past, were sceptical about the concept of Modern Apprenticeships. This required a more sales-oriented role for the business development executives, so this had to be taken into account when recruiting staff for these positions. This is now bearing fruit and feedback from employers on the programme is becoming more positive.

Integration

The challenge has been to integrate Modern Apprenticeships into the established college systems. This has meant reviewing the work undertaken by the team, which had been steadily increasing as the number of Modern Apprenticeships grew, and reallocating some of those tasks to other established areas of the college.

Business development staff are working more closely with the faculties to develop new Modern Apprenticeships where demand is identified, to extend the range of courses being offered to employers and trainees.

The extent to which this integration has been achieved was made clear in the early part of 1997, when Hampshire TEC undertook a quality audit of its training suppliers and awarded Highbury a much-coveted Silver Award.

Fay Deakin, Business Services Manager, says:

> *This was largely due to the extent to which the college had managed to embed Modern Apprenticeships within the college curriculum. As it was early days, many new procedures had not been in place long enough to be considered for audit purposes and we were very close to achieving gold. The college definitely has an eye on a gold the next time round!*

A quote from the Hampshire TEC audit report backs this up:

> *This is an excellent result given the short time that Highbury has had this contract. The standard achieved is an indicator of the hard work, dedication and competence of the staff. This is backed up by the many resources of the college and in particular the obvious support and enthusiasm of the principal.*

Future plans

Highbury Training offers more than 20 Modern Apprenticeships and is planning to introduce new programmes in sectors as diverse as Broadcasting, Furniture, Retailing and Travel Services, as well as offering companies a composite range of business short courses and services.

Doncaster College: Developing the knowledge economy – a people strategy

Flying high with British Aerospace

David Fell and Derek Watling outline and analyse the successful development of management and business education within Doncaster College's new business school in a challenging business environment. They describe its role as a service provider to one of the UK's leading employers, British Aerospace, mounting personnel training and development for all 12 of its business units and all personnel practitioners.

The business school

The Dearne Valley Business School is in the heart of South Yorkshire. The business school was founded in 1992 following a successful bid for £1 million of City Challenge funding which was used to refurbish and equip an 18th century mansion on the college's 120 acre rural High Melton site. Since its inauguration by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, the business school has exceeded all its targets and this year will enrol more than 2,000 students on to its undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and customised training and education programmes. Its fee structure and the demand for its programmes have enabled it to become self-sufficient and make an impressive contribution to the college's positive financial position.

Development of the school

Strategic process

The creation of the business school from the original vision to its successful implementation was a five-stage process. The vision was to provide high quality business and management education, training, and consultancy up to and including higher education level to help in the regeneration of an area that has suffered more than its fair share of economic decline from closures in the steel, coal and rail industries. The second stage was to test the potential for achieving the vision. Extensive research was required into the likely demand for business and management training within the Dearne area and the surrounding region. The results of the research identified the level and focus of demand and informed the business school's strategy.

As many strategists know (but often won't admit) the third stage, the development of the strategy, was the easy part of the school's development. The next stage, that of implementation, is the difficult part. Much care has been taken to ensure that staff involved are equipped with the necessary skills and that the business school expands at an appropriate rate in terms of financial propriety and the quality of programme delivery. The final stage is to evaluate on a continuous basis the activities of the school and to revisit the original vision. Adjustments to the strategy are made in the light of operational experience and market changes.

Getting close to the customers

A well-developed process for reaching its customers has provided the basis for the school's continued success. A cornerstone has been a marketing plan that has engaged the support of stakeholders and promoted a market-oriented approach to product design. This approach has ensured the relevance of programme design and delivery. The school's emphasis on customer care has also helped it to develop and retain its customer base. All of the school's staff have been encouraged to develop marketing and selling skills. These skills, sometimes frowned upon in the academic context, have resulted in new business and the development of employer links.

The school's action learning philosophy is reflected in the design of learning opportunities from NVQ 3 to Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) which reflect the realities of the workplace and offer clear and accessible progression routes. This has given the school a competitive advantage. Its emphasis on delivering consistently high quality, well-resourced programmes has added value to its reputation and market position.

Human resource strategy

It is the school's human resource strategy which is probably the true key to its success. It has recruited only staff with an appropriate mix of academic qualifications and relevant business experience. All tutors have at least 10 years' practical experience at middle to senior management level. This has allowed it to design and deliver programmes of relevance, giving it credibility with its students and client organisations. A commitment to team-working, a continuous

development ethic and a flexible staff have also been necessary for the school to develop. A policy of promotion from within, as the school expands, has aided team-working and levels of motivation.

This formula has led to impressive penetration of undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and customised training markets. The school's corporate customer base has expanded significantly since its formation in 1992.

Working with British Aerospace

In 1996, the business school secured a five-year contract, worth more than £1 million, with one of the UK's leading organisations, British Aerospace (BAe), to provide personnel training and development for all 12 of its business units and all 500 of its personnel practitioners.

Employing approximately 44,000 employees, BAe has embarked upon a path to achieve world-class status and to be the benchmark for the global defence and aerospace industry. As part of this initiative, BAe has developed a people strategy to support the achievement of benchmark status. The personnel function has a critical role to play in realising this strategy, so BAe devised a development strategy for personnel staff called 'Developing you'. It then sought a partner to give its human resources practitioners the training and development required to ensure that they:

- understand the changing environment in which they operate and the role of the personnel within it
- are equipped with the personal and technical skills and confidence to manage and implement change effectively
- can find solutions *with* clients rather than be expected to give answers
- can introduce and implement strategic change with clients, by challenging long-standing assumptions and practices within the organisation.

The business school was the partner they chose.

Developing a programme

The business school has worked with BAe to develop a suite of programmes, from those for junior managers through to ones at director level, which will assist the personnel function to realise the organisation's people strategy. These programmes offer:

- specially designed accredited courses which enable participants to achieve membership of the Institute of Personnel and Development and postgraduate qualifications including a Master of Science (MSc) in Personnel and Development
- customised 'core modules' that focus on the skills personnel practitioners require to move BAe forward and add value to its business; these include ones on influencing, facilitation and consultancy skills, managing change, and strategic human resources issues.

Most of these modules are delivered on a residential basis at the business school's High Melton centre. Workshops vary in length and number depending on the programmes being attended. From BAe's point of view this enables individuals from different business units to share information and best practice and is a more manageable way of releasing people from the organisation than traditional afternoon and evening or day release modes of attendance.

Mutual benefits

From the business school's perspective, workshops enable a more focused delivery and make good use of the organisation's conference unit. The programmes also provide sound developmental opportunities for business school staff as there is a need for tutors to become familiar with the client organisation's culture and operation. These developmental opportunities are mutually beneficial and are demonstrated by a commitment from senior BAe personnel directors to contribute to the programme delivery and by BAe providing, on a six-month secondment basis, a dedicated human resources project manager to work alongside the Dearne Valley Business School project manager and human resources team.

Future plans

The partnership has already led to enquiries from other functions within BAe especially in respect to the appropriateness of the 'core modules'. As the current provision matures it is anticipated that BAe line management will be able to benefit from the arrangement. In future, BAe's major suppliers may also become involved.

The partnership activity has already had 'spin offs'. For example, BAe has just launched a new personnel initiative called 'Developing us' which is concerned with the sharing of 'best' personnel practice across

the 12 business units. Dearne Valley Business School will have an integral part to play in helping to identify BAe best practice.

The partnership activity has also generated interest beyond BAe and the business school has recently signed other substantial contracts with leading organisations.

The Dearne Valley Business School formula has worked impressively during the last five years for all its stakeholders and particularly its staff, students, clients and parent college. Further planned developments and the quality, flexibility and well-founded confidence of its staff will ensure its continued progress to becoming one of the UK's benchmark business schools.

ENTERPRISE

Milton Keynes College: Working with SMEs and supply chain brokerage

David Ansell and Winsome Hutchinson of Milton Keynes College describe how a centre of excellence in logistics and distribution was developed to meet the labour market and training needs of SMEs in the region. The area has a healthy economy with 95% of local businesses classified as small enterprises. Working with its partners in the initiative, Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, and the industry, they have secured Competitiveness Fund resources which have led to a state-of-the-art centre and training for those working in logistics.

The area and its industry

Since the designation of Milton Keynes as a New Town in the late 1960s, its population increased rapidly to the present total of 227,000. This figure is expected to rise to 250,000 by the year 2002. To date, the town has been successful in attracting the necessary economic growth to sustain the rise in population: some 27 significant companies chose to locate their activities in Milton Keynes in 1995–96. The unemployment rate for the area is well below the national figure.

Milton Keynes College has a strong relationship with the Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise and its education company, Countec. The resulting Milton Keynes Economic Partnership was established in 1994 to help sustain growth and generate inward investment. It has recently published a second Joint Economic Development Strategy, for the period 1997–2002. The chamber is a key player in the partnership.

There are 5,249 firms and businesses in the area, of which 95% have 50 or fewer employees. Most employees work in the service sector (76%) or in production (20%). Local knowledge of the economy indicates that there are important subsections to these categories which either constitute significant concentrations of companies or are at the leading edge in their industrial sector. Such industries are likely to be important for the development of the local, regional or national economy in future years, and often have rapidly developing training needs that are not currently being met. One such example is logistics.

Expanding logistics activity

Logistics is often mistakenly viewed as being synonymous with warehousing and transport. It does encompass both activities but the definition adopted by the Institute of Logistics perhaps best represents the logistics function, this being:

> *The control of materials in the total supply chain, sourcing, manufacture and delivery to optimise costs, efficiency and customer service.*

During the last decade, Milton Keynes has seen a rapid increase in logistics-based activity due to its proximity to motorway networks and the availability of large sites earmarked for storage and distribution centres by the planning department at Milton Keynes Council.

The implications of expanding logistics activity as an in-house or third-party activity have largely revolved around an increasing need for 'multi-skilled' employees with an in-depth understanding of total supply chain management. Falling margins, particularly in retailing, have compelled companies to rationalise their structures and re-engineer processes to cut costs and restore profits to acceptable levels. To compete successfully, companies need to deliver a high quality service geared to the specific needs of their customers across the supply chain. They must maximise the use of technology and the abilities of their staff.

Under-developed provision

Despite the global scope of logistics activity, current training and education provision in FE colleges is underdeveloped. This is despite significant needs, which are at:

- operative level for specific training in new skills (for example, IT packages) and, increasingly, for operatives to understand how their actions fit into an integrated supply chain
- supervisor level for providing new entry points to the profession for increased understanding of their role in the supply chain and improved ability to use management information systems
- middle/senior management level for training and education which enables them to look beyond their particular specialism to understand the whole supply chain and their role in it.

FE Competitiveness Fund

Against this background, Milton Keynes College made a bid in 1995/1996 to the Further Education Competitiveness Fund to create a national centre of excellence in logistics and distribution to meet the labour market and training needs of SMEs in Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire and the wider region. The bid was made in partnership with the industry and the new Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise.

Elation at the formal notification of the success of the bid gave way to the somewhat daunting reality of bringing the vision into being. The process began by recruiting a project manager and establishing a logistics steering group with representatives from local industries, such as:

- Argos Distributors Limited
- Beiersdorf UK Limited
- Tensator Limited
- Enterprise Forwarding Limited
- Volkswagen Group (UK) Limited
- Samson Transport
- Unisys Limited
- Team User Systems Company Limited.

as well as professional and training/educational bodies such as:

- Institute of Logistics
- Chartered Institute of Transport
- Countec.

The steering group's initial task was to agree a work plan and prioritise action to ensure the relevance and success of the proposed centre.

Building relationships

Because logistics is a people-based industry the project manager needed to build relationships between Milton Keynes College – perceived by industry as being removed from commercial reality – and local industry – perceived by some college staff as being a reluctant and limited participant in further education and lifelong learning.

The project manager found that firms had a limited understanding of what an FE college did, or of the mutual benefits of a strategic education-business partnership. The process of successful relationship building did not require a traditional non-flexible, 'we have all the answers' approach, but rather a 'we are prepared to listen to your expressed needs, assist in identifying unexpressed needs and to bring our knowledge and expertise into the equation of finding relevant solutions' approach.

Collaborative working with the steering group has secured the commitment of its members to the Logistics Centre – a crucial factor in ensuring its continued success. At each steering group meeting the project manager gives a progress report and seeks advice and opinions, with the aim of finding out what makes industry tick. This process has yielded far more quantitative and qualitative data than paper-based quality review processes.

The outcome of strategically focusing on a small group of large employers engaged in logistics-related activity has resulted in a:

- change in employers' attitude to further education generally and particularly to Milton Keynes College
- commitment from local industry
- new curriculum development initiative
- a logistics centre that is thriving on a reputation gained from delivering a high quality service
- growing interest from other companies (both local and national) that want to become involved and benefit from the services provided.

The Logistics Centre is a successful state-of-the-art experiential learning centre that designs and delivers a curriculum for the logistics and distribution industry – a curriculum that ranges from part-time/block-release programmes to individualised specialist training and consultancy services.

Raising the profile

It is difficult to define precisely what has made the centre successful. Suffice it to say that the strategic partnerships originally established with local industry have extended well beyond the initial seven companies. Increased face-to-face contact and discussions with key industry players has greatly raised the local profile of Milton Keynes College.

The comments that follow give a flavour of local industry's response to the initiative:

We have benefited from the innovation and activities which have emerged from the partnership approach between the college and the organisations involved which has demonstrated what can be achieved to support and develop both the local community and local industry.

John Davies, Production Control Manager, Tensator Limited

Your vision in forming the centre, perseverance in obtaining funding and hard work in liaising with local industry, commerce and professional bodies to ensure that the programmes and facilities on offer meet both students' learning needs and those of current and future employers, provides an example to all. The centre clearly demonstrates the benefits of industry and education working in partnership.

Andrew Ablett, Distribution Personnel Manager, Argos Distributors Limited

Having been a member of the steering group since the project's commencement in July 1995, I have gained an invaluable insight into the working of the further education system and, in particular, the benefits.

Louise Heathorn, Operations Manager, Enterprise Forwarding Limited

Before the centre of excellence was established, training opportunities in logistics were largely fragmented. It is our intention to incorporate training at the centre with that of our own.

John Slope, Personnel and Training Manager, Samson Transport

There has long been a need to provide a comprehensive facility to help develop professionalism and core competencies in those who work in logistics.

Nick Mabey, Quality and Services Manager, Beiersdorf UK Limited

Logistics is at the heart of modern industry, driving efficiency improvements throughout the supply chain, yet at the start of this project it was clear that there was a lack of comprehensive high quality modern training provision in this key discipline.

Phil Pavard, Head of Personnel, Volkswagen Group (UK) Limited

I was very impressed at the speed at which the college set up its education offering and was lucky to be able to send several of my staff on the first Certificate in Logistics courses . . . their progress has been extremely good.

Peter Mayo, Service Design Organisation DCSS Technology Manager, Unisys Limited

Future plans

The work achieved as a result of obtaining an FE Competitiveness Fund has facilitated a substantial shift in:

- working practices
- attitudes
- entrepreneurial activities
- strategy and structure.

While the future may not be orange, it is certainly bright!

ENTERPRISE

Northern Colleges Network: Supporting SMEs through flexible training

Alan Dixon describes another initiative which arose from a Competitiveness Fund Project, the Northern Colleges Network (NCN). This equipped all the colleges in the northern region to deliver training to SMEs by means of telematics.

The network

Northern Colleges Network Ltd (NCN) is a company established following a successful Competitiveness Fund project which linked all the colleges in the north-east of England to a wide area network. The initiative aimed to provide SMEs with flexible training opportunities. However, it has also resulted in significant curriculum advances across all the FE offer.

The NCN newsletter for June 1997, identifies a number of initiatives that the company is progressing:

> *The BBC has requested the assistance of NCN in developing areas of digitised educational material, combining the production expertise of the BBC with the educational expertise of the NCN member colleges.*

NCN will submit a regional Objective 2 bid on behalf of and with the co-operation of the member colleges to develop further the services and opportunities available through the network for small and medium-sized enterprises in the north-east of England.

The proposed application seeks to provide:

- an Information Communication Technology Needs Analysis service for SMEs in the north-east to encourage and persuade them of the benefits and opportunities available through using new information technologies
- a subsidised (and time limited) leasing service to SMEs to enable them to access information technology in line with their identified needs analysis
- membership of a range of linked services with a competitive benefit to SMEs, via membership of NCN.

If approved by the NCN board of directors, the bid, estimated at just less than £3 million, will give SMEs access to a variety of services such as videoconferencing, customised training, e-mail facilities, British Telecommunications (BT) dial-up services, bulletin boards, Internet access, SME-to-SME assistance/networking, links to other intranet services, areas for Web page development, and Web commerce and electronic data interchange.

The incentive offered by the Competitiveness Fund has prompted collaboration among the northern colleges to develop on-line services for business.

REGENERATION

Pembrokeshire College: Local action to develop new industries

Clive Hutt of Pembrokeshire College describes a range of regeneration activities related to the marine and sea-fishing industries in West Wales, a growing industry in the area developed after the collapse of the local oil industry. The college has taken an active role to ensure that local people are given training that will enable them to support the emerging new marine maintenance sector.

The college

Pembrokeshire College is a general FE college serving a large rural area, predominantly coastal, which has a population of approximately 200,000 people. The college has approximately 2,500 full-time students and 500 plus HE students. More than 30% of its income comes from commercial activity and sponsorship.

Industry in the area

The local industrial infrastructure is extremely fragile. It was dependent upon oil refineries, a power station based around the natural harbour of Milford Haven, agriculture and tourism. The power station has closed and one of the three refineries is about to close. Agriculture is in crisis and tourism is in danger of decline following the 'Sea Empress' oil spillage incident. Male unemployment in the Milford Haven area stands at around 30%. However, there is a strong tradition of self-employment and some small, high tech industries are growing rapidly.

Local economic development is supported by Pembrokeshire County Council, West Wales TEC and the Welsh Development Agency. The TEC and the Development Agency are now focusing their activities on supporting small initiatives away from the M4 corridor, where all major industrial developments had been focused. The college works with all these partners strategically and operationally with representation at board and front-line level. It aims to support activities developed by other partners and to promote its own initiatives. Contacts are established and maintained through a range of sector steering groups and through networking events.

Support for marine and sea-fishing industries

In 1992, information from TEC sources and from the college's information on the market indicated a skills shortage in the marine maintenance sector. A number of marinas had been set up in the area, offering berths at lower prices than the south coast of England, and specialist boat-building and refurbishment operations were set up to support them.

Working with an independent marine training consultant, the college developed a training programme supported by the Marine and Engineering Training Association. This programme was linked to the existing NVQ structure.

Funding for the venture came partly from a successful European bid to KONVER, the programme for areas disadvantaged by the peace dividend (see Kypri and Clark, 1997, for further information). Matched funding was received from the TEC and the Further Education Funding Council for Wales (FEFCW). In September 1992, the first group of unemployed adult trainees began the programme. The college had no expertise among its staff to support the programme and initially relied upon locally recruited part-time staff with extensive industrial experience. There was immediate local interest and the numbers on the programme grew to the stage where it was impossible to contain it on campus. The Milford Haven Port Authority offered accommodation for the project on the waterside and local companies offered boats on which to undertake maintenance training. Full-time college staff managed the project while part-time staff delivered the programme. The first group completed the course after a year and most found employment locally or in the marinas of southern Europe.

Development of the initiative

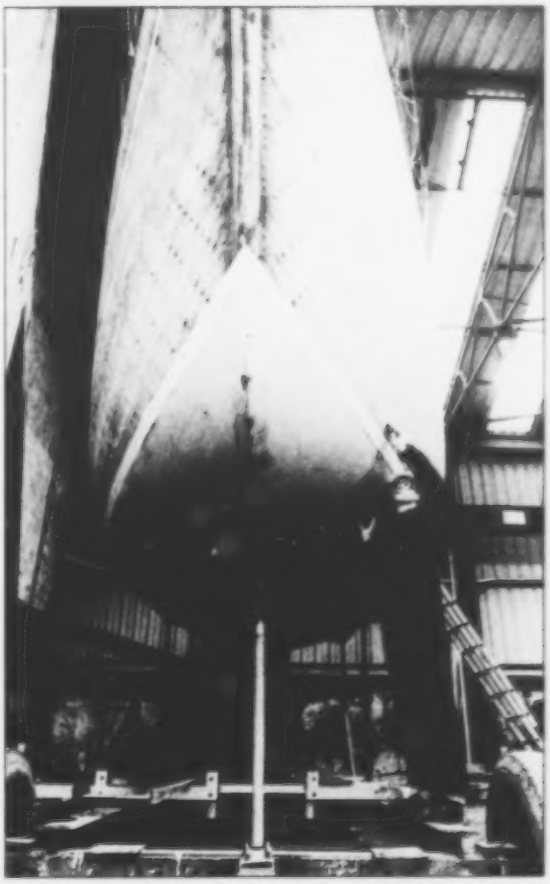
From this beginning the project then started a phased development:

September 1993

A full-time Marine Craft programme was started for school leavers in a leased building sponsored by local industry. Full-time instructors were recruited to teach the programme.

January 1994

A Marine Modern Apprenticeship Scheme was initiated, based around a consortium of local employers who undertake specialist marine operations. Each apprentice is employed by one member of the consortium but moves around the group during the apprenticeship to get a broad-based programme of training and experience. This programme is dependent upon employers not poaching each other's apprentices. A steering group has managed to maintain this system without any major disputes. By providing the skilled workforce required, this programme has had a substantial impact on supporting the development of a local boat-building industry making small vessels for the oil industry.



Proving the need for Pembrokeshire College's marine training initiative, one boat-building company's output has increased in one year from one boat a year to one boat a week

June 1994

The Craft programme and the Apprenticeship scheme thrived but resourcing was a problem. In particular it was not possible to provide training on large marine engines in local facilities, so links were forged with the Nantes Marine College in France, which has a specialist large engine training facility. A programme of student exchanges was organised, the French students coming to Pembrokeshire to work

on small engines while the Welsh students went to Nantes to work on large engines. The Nantes Marine College also had expertise in sea-fishing training, which would be useful later on in the project. Employers and students felt that to maintain boats effectively they should also know how to use them. The college formed a partnership with Pembrokeshire Water Sports so that power boating and sailing training could be integrated into the curriculum.

September 1995

The success of Pembrokeshire College in supporting local marinas with maintenance staff and small boat-builders with engineering apprentices subsequently revealed a skills shortage at a design level. Working with the University of Glamorgan and a group of consultants from local companies, a Higher National Diploma (HND) programme in small boat design was developed which was validated in the summer of 1995. The first cohort of students began in September 1996. Working with the TEC and local companies, the college now offers graduate traineeships for students completing this programme. A trainee is given local employment and the opportunity to study to Bachelor of Science level with a complementary NVQ Level 4 skills-based qualification. The quality of the HND programme was enhanced by successful bids to the FE Competitiveness Fund for computer systems and software to support boat design training.

January 1996

The college formed links with the Sea Fish Authority when an analysis of the market revealed a lack of qualified workers in this sector. This will become crucial to the industry as European legislation makes a qualification a requirement for working in the sector. As a result of initial contacts a strong working relationship was developed with the Welsh Sea-fishing Industry Group Training Association (GTA) and a steering group was formed with the TEC, the Port Authority and the Marine Safety Agency. It is from this group that the Sea-fishing Modern Apprenticeship scheme was developed. Initially planned as a local scheme, it soon became apparent there was a national demand. With TEC support a National Sea-fishing Modern Apprenticeship Scheme commenced in September 1996 with about 20 trainees. In the summer of 1997 it was the largest scheme in the UK. It is a 'bad weather' scheme which means trainees come to the college for short sharp inputs when they are unable to go to sea. The training is delivered by skilled part-time staff managed by full-time college staff. The scheme is held together by GTA staff who act as tutors to the apprentices and as advisors to the skipper, who helps collects evidence for the NVQ qualification. While the programme runs effectively, it would benefit from enhanced tutorial support from college staff and from distance learning facilities. A successful bid has been made to BT to support video-conferencing facilities based at ports along the Welsh coast and a pilot programme is now underway.

Benefits and impact

The benefits of this initiative are perhaps best illustrated by comments from individuals involved:

> *I feel I have the skills and confidence to get my own fishing boat now that I have got my NVQs.*
>
> ***Sea-fishing Modern Apprentice***

> *The continued support of Pembrokeshire College in developing my workforce and producing a continuing supply of high quality apprentices is essential to the development of my company.*
>
> ***Milford Haven Ship-building Company Manager***

> *I have received job offers from Canada and Australia. My problem is deciding which one to accept!*
>
> ***Adult Marine Craft Trainee***

> *The programme is exciting, well structured and practical. The teachers have good backgrounds in industry and really know what they are talking about.*
>
> ***HND Leisure Boat Design student***

Individuals have benefited from better job opportunities, the availability of apprenticeships, the chance to update and learn new skills and F/HE opportunities which improve their career choices.

Employers have benefited from the availability of a suitably skilled workforce, appropriate apprenticeship routes, and the development of high level skills to meet current and future needs.

For the local economy, the initiative acted as a catalyst for local development and as a support for new industries. The continuation of sea-fishing has been ensured through equipping workers with the qualifications required by recent legislation. The existence of skilled graduates helps added value products to be developed locally.

In 1992, there were no apprentices in the sea-fishing or marine engineering sector – in 1997 there were 50. More than 600 fishing boat skippers have shown an interest in gaining qualifications for themselves and their crew. One boat-building company's output has increased in the last year from one boat a year to one boat a week. The intake of marine-related students into the college has tripled in the last three years.

A full-time marine-based degree programme is planned in two years' time.

Views of partners

Working with the college has been essential to our success. Working together we have made things happen.

Jim Williamson, Welsh Sea-fishing Industry Group Training Association

Training, support for innovation and enterprise ... in this sector supports the objectives of the Regional Technology Plan [RTP].

RTP Steering Group, Welsh Development Agency

A strong and effective partnership has developed between ourselves and the college, and we are proud of our joint successes.

Len Morgan, West Wales TEC

Strengths and weaknesses

The key strength of this initiative has been its rapid response to local needs. However, the speed of the response posed some problems:

- initial planning was limited in its effectiveness due to the speed of development
- resourcing proved inadequate because of an underestimation of demand
- managing groups of inexperienced part-time staff was difficult.

These problems have now largely been overcome.

The other strengths of the initiative include:

- providing skilled workers to remove skills shortages from the local economy
- giving unemployed people new horizons and opening employment opportunities for them locally and further afield
- supporting the real needs of employers.

Future plans

The Marine Steering Group is attempting to set up a Marine Innovation Technology and Enterprise Centre in Milford Haven to support training, business start-up and consultancy. A total of 50% of the funding comes from local businesses with the balance being applied for through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The Welsh Development Agency has recognised this development within its RTP.

The college developed the first Tug Boat Modern Apprenticeship scheme in the UK which had its first intake in September 1997.

Transnational links with centres of expertise in Europe are being developed to enable local innovation in the marine sector.

Development is also being made into associated areas of fish processing, marketing and distribution.

REGENERATION

Lewisham and Dearne Valley Colleges: New buildings for a new era – the stakeholder role

Dick Palmer of Lewisham and Jan Driffill of Dearne Valley describe the positive effects on the local economy of their respective new purpose-built college buildings.

Lewisham College – Deptford Campus

Lewisham College is a large, predominantly vocational, FE provider based in south-east London. It has around 12,000 enrolments, of whom 52% come from ethnic minority backgrounds, 51% are female and around 80% are unemployed.

It is located in an area of high unemployment, particularly among young black males, and of social deprivation, with a high incidence of single parent families.

The recent withdrawal of medium to large employers (Lewisham College itself is in the top five of local large employers) exacerbates the issues inherent in a capital city, such as disaffected youth, high crime rates and housing estates-based concerns.

Nevertheless, the college is also:

- gaining a national and international reputation for its quality of services
- in the south-east quadrant of the capital which is now attracting major public infrastructure investment – the Docklands Light Railway, the extension of the Jubilee line, major SRB programmes and the Millennium Festival itself.

Background to the development

Lewisham College recognised that although Deptford City Challenge was entering its final phase, potential developments, such as Creekside Single Regeneration Bids and the proposed Docklands Light Railway extension, could compensate for the lack of inward investment into the area. The location of the new campus provided strategic opportunities for helping the local community to regenerate its economy. The college also wished to rationalise its building stock while relocating its centre of gravity to Deptford and North Lewisham – an area of multiple deprivation with some of the highest youth unemployment levels in the country. Consequently, the college decided to purchase a redundant, although purpose-built training centre, on Deptford Creek – which is to be traversed by the Docklands Light Railway. A new station will be opened adjacent to the college's entrance by 2000.

Lewisham College became a two-campus college and used property receipts to refurbish and equip its Deptford Campus. The campus has state-of-the-art workshop facilities for construction, fashion, art and design, and motor vehicle courses, and a sports hall for leisure and recreation and fitness training. It was opened in September 1996 and launched by the now Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in December 1996.

The aims of the new campus were to:

- bring vocational training to the centre of a depressed and disadvantaged area
- provide training that would lead directly to local employment
- link with and support local employers
- strengthen TEC and City Challenge initiatives with first-class training facilities
- focus more sharply on the college's natural community and embed the college within the local economy.

Key issues

- The development of the campus was the subject of wide consultation.
- Governors with specialist expertise were involved.
- The project manager and team of contractors were appointed by tender.
- Funding was provided from property disposals with a bridging loan to enable initial purchase and refurbishment.
- The development will result in reduced long-term maintenance costs, economies of scale, and operating efficiencies.
- Timetables have been developed to minimise the need for travel between sites.

Development stages

1993

Strategic Plan – the college's constructing capability accommodation strategy, identifying preferred solutions to rationalise on to two sites, was accepted by the FEFC and a borrowing facility was approved.

1994

A site was identified, evaluated, and then purchased.

1995-6

Three large buildings were refurbished and the site converted to Deptford Campus.

September 1996

The campus was opened to students.

1997–2000

The Docklands Light Railway is to be constructed, and will run through the college's campus.

Benefits and impact

Outcomes to date include:

- a threefold increase in local enrolments within the local Creekside area
- a strong demand for courses shown by increased enquiries for the provision offered at the campus and linked to the availability of state-of-the-art facilities
- increased employer links illustrated by partnership provision now being delivered through contributions from local and international firms, such as Convoys, a local logistics company, and Rank Xerox, the multi-national equipment organisation

- a recognition of the college as a key part of the local economy – strategic networking by the college is promoting the natural strengths of the area via visits of potential investors in the community to the campus.

Impact on the community and local economy

- The new campus has given the college the opportunity to extend its policy of zero course fees for concessionary students.
- Where possible, the labour required for refurbishing the site was employed from the local area, and similarly for the campus staff, particularly for the security, premises and administration posts.
- Employers make use of the campus, for example, as a conference facility, and as a venue for launching new products.
- At half-term/Easter recesses, facilities are opened to public use for leisure and sports activities. Particular emphasis has been placed on providing opportunities which encourage under-16s to access the facilities in the campus.
- Saturday College started in 1996/97, across a range of provision and with more than 200 students attending each week.
- There has been an increase in the number of local unemployed students taking up education/training opportunities.
- Destinations are expected to show local employment enhancement in 1997 onwards.

Strengths and difficulties

Strengths

- The high profile launch by Tony Blair located the new campus strategically with potential investors who otherwise would not have been drawn to the area.
- The location of the campus fits into many local (for example, Creekside SRB) and national (for example, DLR) initiatives which support the regeneration of the area's infrastructure and the associated educational and training needs of all its residents.
- The delineation of curriculum areas has enabled the college to focus capital investment in a concentrated manner, allowing the provision of state-of-the-art facilities.

Difficulties

- The administrative/management support for the campus has had to be re-evaluated as its needs have proven disproportionate to the ratio of students serviced at each site.
- Due to the technical nature of most of the provision at the new campus, the use of general classroom accommodation has been evaluated and new non-technical areas of work will be introduced from 1998/9.

Future plans

The introduction of more diverse curriculum areas to the campus will extend its provision and its connection with local initiatives. One example of this is the development of more academically-based curricula which fit with the cultural and heritage industries being developed within the locality because of the millennium initiatives.

The opening of the DLR will mean the college has access to, and is accessible by, employers and employees from further afield. More importantly, it substantiates Lewisham College's claim that it 'is not the destination (for students), it's the place that gets them there'.

As new industries and sectors are generated in the area, supported through the Millennium and Creekside initiatives, Lewisham College will need to respond flexibly to new training requirements. These developments offer an opportunity for the college to become the nexus point of education and training services within the south-east quadrant of the capital at a significant moment in both local, national and global history – the new millennium.

Dearne Valley College

Dearne Valley College, formerly Rockingham College, lies within the Rotherham district in South Yorkshire, close to its boundaries with Barnsley and Doncaster. It is in the centre of the Dearne Valley. The traditional heavy industries of coal and steel provided long-term employment for many people here. Employment in the area is now predominantly in the service industries, retailing and IT, with a high percentage of women employed on a part-time basis.

There are six Enterprise Zones within a three-mile radius of the college. In the college's travel-to-learn area there are approximately 1,000 SMEs. Unemployment in the Rotherham district is the highest in South Yorkshire. The college is one of the largest employers in the area, providing about 400 jobs.

Key players in economic development

The local authorities make capital investments in the area and are involved in several land reclamation projects. The TECs (Rotherham and Barnsley/ Doncaster) offer support to businesses through their Business Link and Start Up programmes.

The college is actively involved with key partners in bids for funding. It is important to have accurate and extensive knowledge of the local area to identify strategies and to enable the targeting of appropriate funding. All the key players are an important source of information.

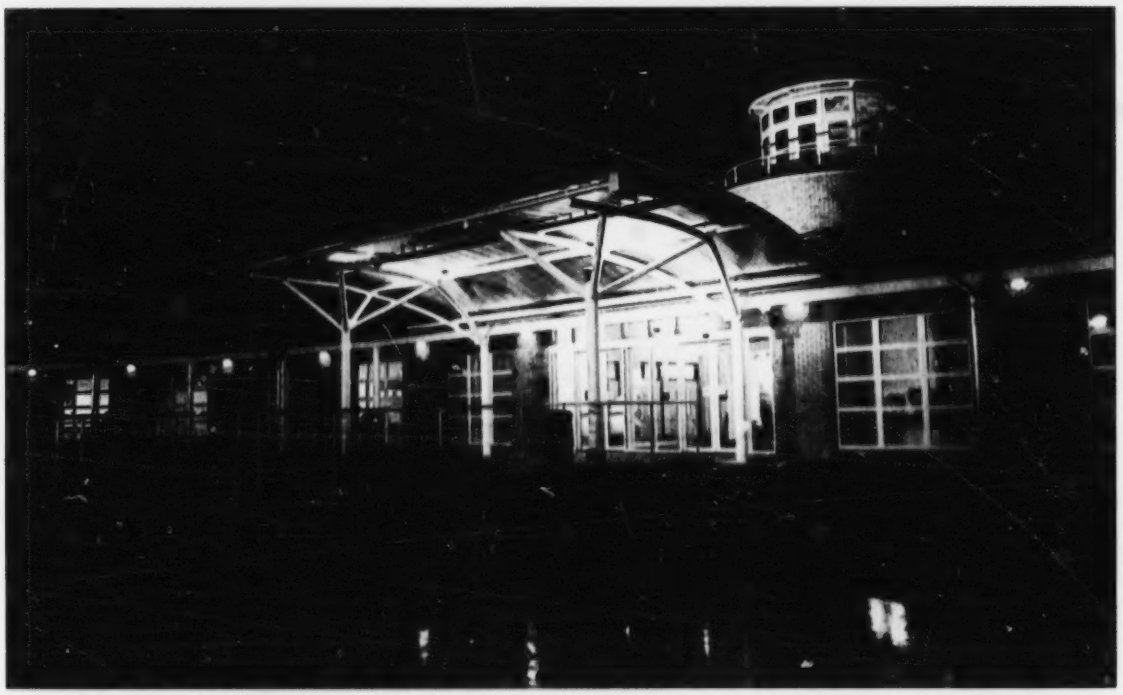
Recent bids have resulted in various developments:

- IT and Internet development within the college is changing the ways available for people to learn; the college is promoting the uses of the Internet to enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of companies
- an ERDF project which offers IT training and the loan of a computer to local companies so that they can develop the use of IT within their organisations
- TEC funding is being used to promote skills enhancement training at introductory levels in such areas as Information Technology, Communications and Management
- European funding has been used to offer business support and training of redundant steel workers and miners.

The college's work has always been geared to the needs of local employers. It is for this reason that it was asked to take part in the bid for funding by the Dearne Valley Partnership, established in 1991 to co-ordinate the regeneration of the Dearne Valley area. The partnership involves three local authorities – Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham – and private business interests. Dearne Valley Partnership was initially funded by City Challenge, but is now funded by the SRB. Funding for the college was contingent upon 80% of its provision being linked to supporting SMEs.

New building

Between 1992 and 1996, £7 million of City Challenge and European funding became available for support for SMEs in the regeneration of the Dearne Valley. This provided new buildings for the college on a site donated by British Coal and refurbished buildings on a site purchased from British Coal. A further £2 million of government monies was obtained for developing HE telematics programmes. City Challenge and ERDF Capital funding was available for the building of the new college. Dearne Valley City Challenge funding ceased in March 1997. However, funding for the Dearne Valley Partnership has been extended by the use of SRB and local authority support and it continues to promote partnerships with key players, including colleges, towards the regeneration of the Dearne Valley.



The striking new building at Dearne Valley College has become a flagship for regeneration in the area

The Government Office of Yorkshire and Humberside was involved in obtaining:

- RECHAR funding – as this is an ex-mining area (RECHAR is specifically for helping coal-mining areas which have suffered from a decline in business)
- ESF Objective 2 – which is aimed at employed people
- SRB – for strategies aimed at regenerating the area.

The new college is seen as the flagship of the partnership in terms of regeneration of the area. It offers training opportunities to the community and to local industry, requiring an increase in staffing levels.

Development stages

Criteria for constructing the new college building were set by City Challenge in negotiation with the college. There were targets for completion within a certain time, numbers of new jobs created, numbers of students enrolled in the first year, number of training weeks. All of these were met or exceeded.

The Dearne Valley College Curriculum Group – which includes other providers, such as Barnsley College, Rotherham College of Arts and Technology, Sheffield University, Northern College, TECs, the Open University and local school heads – investigated local training needs, decided where, when and how the provision would be offered, planned the training which each partner could provide. Time was spent co-ordinating provision particularly with respect to the availability of resources and access.

The new college building was designed specifically for its purpose. It incorporates many features deemed desirable by the Curriculum Group, such as resource areas for curriculum sectors which facilitate flexible delivery.

Impact on the local economy and skills base

Local architects and builders were used for the construction of the new college. Now in its operational stage, the college purchases many products locally, for instance, stationery, food produce, construction materials and equipment.

The number of staff employed by the college has doubled since 1993, since current areas have been expanded and new ones developed, for example, staff for the fitness centre and extra security personnel. The college now employs more than 400 staff, one-third of these being support staff who are likely to live locally.

The college has a staff development policy, linked to needs analysis, offering qualifications and professional development. This ranges from Internet development, the Certificate of Supervisory Management, Master of the Arts degrees, Customer Service and Word Processing qualifications.

The student population at Dearne Valley College has increased from 9,000 in 1995/1996 to 11,500 in the academic year, 1996/97. Most of the students are following vocational programmes.

Managing the relationship

The college's industrial liaison co-ordinators maintain links with the TECs. They discuss funding issues and collaborate on training initiatives and provide the links between the TECs and the different sections within the college.

The college has an Industrial Liaison Team whose role is to promote the college throughout the Dearne Valley. Each section also has an industrial co-ordinator. All college teaching staff who contact companies are required to complete enquiry and visit forms. Information from the forms is then entered on a database. The industrial liaison system within the college is monitored through its Quality Working Practice. This includes recording procedures and target monitoring. The Industrial Liaison Team reports to the Industrial Liaison Strategic Group which comprises the vice principal, the senior curriculum manager and the section leader for management and business training.

Promoting local businesses

The marketing function of Dearne Valley Partnership provides leads on companies coming into the area. They can then contact the college which promotes the training opportunities available in the valley provided by the partners. The presence of the college is seen as a key selling point for companies coming into the area.

The college is also involved in offering training to micro-sized companies. It has used relationships developed with small business advisers and owners of the companies as a further means to promote the college's training provision.

The Industrial Liaison Team has close links with local TECs and other agencies, including local business clubs. These are privately run and hold monthly meetings for local businesses. The meetings provide an opportunity to obtain local information, become involved in the business community, raise the profile of their business and facilitate intertrading.

College staff use the meetings as an opportunity to contact companies. They also make use of information printed in the clubs' monthly newsletter. This is a useful supplement to the labour market information collected from various sources. Meetings and seminars have been held at the college, giving members a chance to view the facilities available.

Links with the Dearne Valley Partnerships and TECs, especially Business Link, have resulted in the college becoming involved with focus groups which include members of business clusters and look at education and training, marketing, security and IT issues.

Outcomes from these contacts include involvement in training (predominantly IT), SME access to European funding, attendance at seminars and employment for students of the college.

Benefits

To the economy

- Locally:
  - supplying training to employees
  - employing local people (such as architects, builders, college staff and bus drivers)
- Regionally:
  - collaborating with other people/colleges/employers
  - offering a comprehensive pattern of provision
- Nationally:
  - reducing unemployment levels
  - providing an educational resource via the Internet/e-mail.

To employers

Industrial liaison co-ordinators are able to carry out training needs analysis and to offer advice on training programmes. The college provides customised training and can help to find sources of funding from various initiatives.

To individuals

More students are now attending the college and participating in vocational courses covering the service industries, construction, education, health and social care, business administration and management.

To others

The college is used as a meeting place and as a venue for conferences and seminars.

Impact

The impact of the new building is being measured by the number of students enrolled and the number of SMEs involved with the college. On a quantitative evaluation, all targets have been met or exceeded. Qualitatively, feedback from the community has been very positive. Several hundred members of the public attended guided tours of the college before the opening in September 1996 and comments were made such as, 'At last evidence that something is happening in the area'.

Strengths

- Being in the middle of a regeneration area, the college is eligible for many development funds.
- The new building provides a business-like and attractive environment for SMEs.
- Community involvement in the college has increased – local people see the college as a visible sign of regeneration.
- The college provides excellent working conditions for students and staff and a purpose-built learning environment.

Weaknesses

- Because the building needed to be completed before the end of the Dearne Valley Partnership and for college provision to start at the beginning of the academic year there was insufficient planning lead-in time.

Future plans

Phase 2 of the college development is due to commence around September 1998. An application for lottery funding has been made. The new development will include a:

- sports complex
- construction workshop
- day nursery.

The college's status in the local and wider community has been raised by the opening of the new building and through publicity in the local press. There is a raised awareness of college facilities and what it can offer the community and local businesses.

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College: Ensuring long-term skill enhancement

Changing the college culture

Ed Elvish and Dave Kelly, of Barrow-in-Furness Sixth-form college, demonstrate how a rural college may contribute to the development of its local economy. The college has maintained its focus on 16–19 provision but has introduced a new business development unit and courses for the long-term unemployed, brought about through a change in its culture.

The college and its area

Barrow-in-Furness is a small industrial town in the north-west of England off the Furness peninsula. It has relatively high unemployment rates. Manufacturing accounts for 50% of local employment, although tourism continues to be a significant source of work. The area is renowned for its engineering and ship-building industry, particularly the construction of nuclear submarines. Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited still operates as a major employer, although its workforce has declined from about 14,000 in 1989 to 5,500. The remainder of the Furness and South Lakes area which the college serves is largely rural, much of it in the Lake District National Park.

Barrow-in-Furness Sixth-form college opened in September 1979 following the re-organisation of secondary education in the town. It is the only college of its type in Cumbria and it draws in full-time students at 16 from schools in Barrow and Dalton and an increasing number from independent schools and comprehensive schools further afield.

Although the college is essentially a provider for 16 to 19-year-olds, about 10% of the 750 full-time students are adults. It also offers a range of part-time evening classes and considerable use by the community of college facilities during the evening and at weekends. The college has a total of just less than 1,000 enrolments and an annual budget of £2.1 million. There are 75 staff of whom 45 are full-time teaching staff, 15 part-time teaching staff and 15 full-time and part-time support staff.

The core business of the college is centred upon providing a wide choice of A-levels and the college has an established reputation for its examination success rate. Curriculum development is an important issue and the college has introduced General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at both Intermediate and Advanced level and Access to Higher Education courses for mature students.

At incorporation in April 1993, two main overall strategic aims were identified:

- to promote controlled growth and diversity in the college's activity in such a way that the core business of providing for 16 to 19-year-olds was maintained and enhanced
- to secure the future viability of the college through sound financial planning and establishing sufficient reserves to provide a basis for managing efficiency gains.

To achieve both of these aims it was essential to identify the characteristics of the college which might dictate the approaches to increasing its contribution to the economic redevelopment of the Furness peninsula. These were felt to be:

- the culture and ethos was largely derived from the schools' sector, but with the influx of adult students and the expansion in numbers of students and staff this changed to reflect a tertiary college atmosphere; staff operated under school teachers' conditions of service until 1995
- with a turnover in 1993 of less than £2m the college was relatively small without the flexibility and capacity to absorb the additional activity of a larger organisation
- the geography and economic circumstances of the area limit the potential for full cost recovery work with business and industry
- maintaining the public's perception of the distinctiveness of the college from the neighbouring FE college continues to be a powerful argument against any consideration of merger
- 11–16 schools see the college as a major and prestigious provider of 16–19 opportunities in the area and, in some cases, progression to it is seen as an element of their marketing in primary schools
- managers in smaller colleges tend to have a multiplicity of roles and this is particularly true as far as project management is concerned – however, this can be a benefit where the project is relevant to a manager's other functions; in compact organisations it

is much more likely that all staff will have some knowledge of, and familiarity with, all aspects of the college's provision.

Economic regeneration initiatives

The initiatives described below indicate the college's approach to a greater contribution to economic redevelopment in the Furness area while retaining its major focus on 16–19 education.

Business Development Unit

In 1995, the college's careers director took on the additional role of business development unit manager. His brief was to use his knowledge of local industry and his contacts with business, the Careers Service and Cumbria TEC to identify markets for full cost recovery courses.

The first stage was to identify curriculum areas where training could be offered with confidence and where the college's reputation for high quality would be maintained. The intention was to tailor training to individual client needs, but only in areas which the college knew it could deliver well. Among these was modern languages, an area already identified by the TEC and others as a likely area of demand. Following visits to the town's major employers, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd (now GEC Marine) soon identified the potential for the college to contribute to the company's training programme.

Initially, in the summer of 1996, training was provided in two languages, French and German, at Foundation Level. By using college staff 'downtime' it was possible to offer Vickers an attractive rate for the provision. A second phase has introduced higher level courses in both languages, the introduction of a third language and NVQ language work. Much of this has been possible at apparently low cost because of in-built flexibility in languages staff timetables. It has allowed staffing in the faculty to be retained at a level which would not otherwise have been possible.

Integrated business technology

In 1996, the college sought ESF funding for a six-week full-time Integrated Business Technology course for the long-term unemployed. This was scheduled for the downtime at the end of the year to produce meaningful income for the college. The original course was planned for 19 students and was oversubscribed.

After the success of the first course and the subsequent enrolment of about 25% of the participants on to other college courses the following September, it was decided to repeat the offering for 30 students in the summer of 1997. In the event, the college like many others suffered from the reduction in ESF funding and received no financial support. Despite this, because of the value of the course to individual students and to the college and community, the repeat of the course still went ahead.

Market research project

The college, along with the other six colleges in Cumbria (four general FE, two specialist) participated in a TEC co-ordinated development project in 1995–96 to improve labour market information. The focus of the activity was two surveys, household and employer, carried out on the group's behalf by consultants BMG Research. This produced a substantial amount of helpful data. However, the college needed more specific local market information relevant to its mission and to the community it serves.

As a result of discussions with Cumbria TEC, in 1997 a two-year market research project was established, which the TEC part funded. A part-time market researcher is employed 12 hours per week by the college to work through the Business Development Unit to identify training opportunities. Where possible, these will be delivered either by college staff or by others in strategic partnerships developed with the college for this purpose.

Management of change

These initiatives are seen not just as a means of furthering local economies and generating income but as contributing to the management of a change of culture in the college. As more diverse activities are encompassed, staff are becoming more confident to deliver education and training outside their traditional areas which add values to the high quality that is characteristic of their other work.

The college is moving towards a 'can do' culture. However, given the key issues identified earlier, including maintaining quality and the credibility of the college as an institution focused on 16 to 19-year-olds, it is just as important to be clear about those things which should not be undertaken, however tempting they might be.

Benefits

Specific benefits have been:

- to individual staff:
  - widening of horizons and knowledge of business and industry
  - stimulation through delivery to non-traditional client groups
- to individual clients, improved:
  - motivation and/or skills base and qualifications
  - employability
  - confidence and self-esteem
- to employers and the local economy:
  - better motivated and more satisfied workforce (Vickers)
  - improved pool of actual and potential employees
  - perception of the sixth-form college as a key player in developing the local economy, not just as a 16–19 provider.

Incremental change

These initiatives represent significant developments in the culture of a small sixth-form college. The loss of downtime previously used for staff and curriculum development is perceived by some as a retrograde step but is essential if the college is to remain viable. Morale in staff is generally good but the college's greatest asset is its highly qualified, motivated and professional staff. This could easily be put at risk by failure to maintain an appropriate rate of change. The desire for evolution rather than revolution has meant that the rate of change has been on the low side and must be maintained if not increased.

As activity increases the college will need to move to either annual case-loading or some other more flexible mechanism for allocating staff time. The time allocation and status of those involved may need to be upgraded. This anticipated increase in activity could have the additional benefit of further developing local and regional links and networks which seem central to the new government's strategy for education and training.

Future plans

European and UK development funding targeted at areas, such as Furness, which require economic regeneration must be tapped into further.

While the college's standing in the community is being enhanced by the additional activity, its greatest contribution will continue to be in developing skills for the future through 16–19 education and training. More than half of all 16 to 17-year-olds in full-time education are in the FE sector.

Institutions must take account of their geographical, economic and educational circumstances to judge what proportion of their focus should be beyond their core business. For this sixth-form college, its proximity to a general FE college, but distance from any other sixth-form college or similar provision, and its sole provider role for sixth-form education in the immediate locality dictate the approach it takes to furthering the local economy.

Highly committed and competent staff are the key to quality provision. All colleges need to develop a culture of change but the approach to achieving it is dependent on many factors, including history and size of the organisation.

The nature of a college's buildings and the learning environment within them are key to its image in the community and should not be underestimated.

In an area such as Barrow with declining employment prospects, geographical isolation and a traditionally low staying-on rate at 16 (at a present plateau of around 55%) the progression route through the sixth-form college to higher education becomes more significant than ever. Whether this is a contribution to the local economy or a drain on it is difficult to judge – as with many isolated communities with single industry dependency there is a surprisingly high tendency to return after university for work. A study of employment patterns from such a community, say 10 years after leaving college, would be extremely informative.

Darlington College: Social and economic partnerships

In 1997, the town of Darlington was granted unitary status. This case study begins more than two years before this. Alan Dixon of Darlington College of Technology records milestones in the development of a Darlington Partnership and illustrates how an FE college can contribute to this process.

The college

Darlington College of Technology offers programmes in Art and Design, Construction, Engineering, Business, Hotel and Catering, Health and Community Care, Humanities and Basic Education. Outreach provision, including family literacy, is offered in nine centres in the surrounding area. FEFC-funded higher education accounts for 11% of the college's work, and it has franchise agreements with six universities, including a degree in Journalism that has an international reputation. About 1,500 full-time students and 10,000 part-time students attend the college. It employs the equivalent of 370 full-time staff, and the total expenditure forecast for 1996/97 is £11.9 million.

Industry in the area

Darlington has a population of about 100,000, and while the surrounding area is semi-rural, there is a diverse economy including light and heavy engineering, telecommunications, manufacturing, construction, retail, finance and business services.

The college has a long history of working with other key agencies in County Durham and the local area, so it was not surprising that it should play a central role in an initiative for jobs (see article below).

The document 'Creating new opportunity', commissioned by the Darlington Employers Forum and realised at the launch of the initiative, was the product of several months local research. Representatives of the borough council, local companies, Darlington College of Technology, young and older residents of Darlington had been interviewed and asked about their aspirations for the town. From this a strategy paper was put together outlining measures that would deliver key economic and social objectives. Among the social objectives was the intention to undertake a comprehensive social audit and residents survey in the priority areas of Darlington.

A Strategy Implementation Group with representatives from Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Business Venture and Darlington College of Technology was established. This team was supported by a full-time officer, the consultant responsible for the original research.

Good for business

Small businesses in Darlington are being given a boost with the offer of cheap loans.

The loans come from the Midland Bank and are the first part of Darlington Employers Forum's 'Creating New Opportunities' strategy to be put into operation. The strategy was launched last autumn with the aim of promoting business in the town. A £300,000 fund is being created by the Midland Bank to offer loans of £3,000 to £10,000 for up to seven years at interest rates 2% below base rate.

Jack Daley, area manager of Midland, said: 'We are looking to encourage viable Darlington-based businesses to realise their potential.' Called the Falchion Fund, the scheme is named after the 13th century sword used to slay the legendary Sockburn worm near Darlington.

(*Darlington Advertiser*, March 1995)

A blue print for jobs and future prosperity

It was appropriate that a satellite played a central role in yesterday's launch of Darlington's action plan to find 5,000 new jobs. The burgeoning communications industry is expected to be the biggest player as the town's economy enters a new century. Launching the initiative in Darlington, as MP Alan Milburn in Westminster looked on via satellite, Mayor Councillor John Williams said communications in the form of the railways were crucial to the town's Victorian prosperity.

Modern communications, in the form of micro and information technology, would represent Darlington's future prosperity, he said. The jobs programme has brought together existing investment incentives and attracted a range of new funds in a bid to generate new employment opportunities.

(*Northern Echo*, November 1994)

Table 1 Excerpt from the 18 April 1996 report to the Darlington Employers Forum

Firthmoor

Social audit and residents survey completed June 1994.

Action

- Proactive Residents Association now co-ordinating local activity, including Firthmoor Forum.
- Full-time Community Education Worker based at Community Centre.
- Darlington College of Technology offering a range of courses on the Estate.
- Neighbourhood Watch Plus scheme formed and active membership recruited.
- Co-operative business developing an Off-Road Motorcycle Centre; a bid to the Sports Council will be submitted in June 1996.
- A range of social activities have been developed and more are planned.
- Darlington Youth Development Trust has submitted a bid to the National Lottery (Charities Section) to provide a detached youth worker.

Branksome and Cockerton

Social audit and residents survey completed April 1995.

Action

- Residents Association strengthened.
- Neighbourhood Watch Scheme operating.
- Darlington College of Technology offering local courses.
- Job Clinic formed – originally the service was offered weekly but is now available as and when required.

Red Hall

Social audit and residents survey completed in January 1996.

Action

- Employers Forum is assisting with the Red Hall Community Centre building project.
- Information is being gathered to form a data-base for community involvement in social, educational and employment related activities.
- Community Education Service is helping to develop youth activities.
- Local residents are actively involved in the initial development stages of all initiatives.
- Darlington College of Technology is delivering a range of courses at the community centre.

Skerne Park

Social audit and residents survey completed in November 1995.

Action

- Funding has been secured for a community nurse to work with families involved with the misuse of substances.
- A Community Cafe is being developed with input from Pubmasters, Morrison's Trust, Darlington Business Venture, Darlington Borough Council and Skerne Park Action Group.
- Skerne Park Action Group is co-ordinating all local developments.
- Schools Crime Awareness and Reduction Programme (SCARP) is delivering programmes to local schools.
- Community Education Services are exploring ways of increasing youth provision.
- Darlington College of Technology is delivering a range of courses on the estate.

The Falchion Fund, created by Midland Bank, is now part of a package promoted under the title of 'Finance for business in Darlington'.

Venture centre aims to attract enterprise

Advice training and starter workshops are all on offer at Darlington's newest business centre. The all-in-one package is available at the new Morrison's site on Yarm Road. A purpose-built centre houses about 12 staff from three separate agencies. Darlington Business Venture will run start-up courses, advice and counselling ... Darlington College will also run courses, particularly those leading to NVQ certificates, while William Morrison Enterprise Trust will stage workshops in basic literacy and numeracy, and the use of computers. Up to 5,000 visitors are expected to call at the joint office over the coming year. Funding has come from County Durham Training and Enterprise Council, the borough council and the Further Education Funding Council.

(*Darlington and Stockton Times*, August 1995)

Since Tony Blair opened the centre, the numbers benefiting from the facility have progressively increased.

1,000 new jobs, and the numbers are still growing

A pioneering jobs initiative in Darlington this week celebrated its 1,000th success story in just 11 months. Mr Simon Randolph, aged 22, found himself in the spotlight when he won a full-time post in the garden centre of Dickens' new hypermarket, which is shortly to open at the Morton Palms development on the edge of town. Unemployed for two years, Mr Randolph, who lives in Leyburn Road, Darlington, said getting a job was wonderful news. He attended an event on Thursday to celebrate the 1,000th success, at which he and Mr Alan Milburn, MP for Darlington, took delivery of 1,000 crocus bulbs given to the town by Dickens. Creating New Opportunity, an initiative launched on 1 November, is a jobs programme in which businesses, training organisations, and the borough council work together to create jobs in the town. The strategy aims to create 5,000 jobs for Darlington by 2001 and it's tremendous start gives the backers a good platform to work from.

(*Darlington and Stockton Times*, October 1995)

Table 1 is an excerpt from the 18 April 1996 report to the Darlington Employers Forum, highlighting its commitment to social as well as economic objectives. The report lists developments arising from the social audit and residents survey carried out on four housing estates in Darlington. Many initiatives have now been put in place as a result of the Forum to which the college is making a significant contribution. This initiative took place at a time when the new unitary authority was being established.

A consultation document, 'The case for an Economic and Social Partnership for Darlington', issued in July 1996, sought the views of the people of Darlington on how the work initiated by the Employers Forum should be carried forward. Options ranged from status quo to limited company status. The result was the Darlington Social and Economic Partnership (now shortened to the Darlington Partnership).

By May 1997, there were 15 representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors on the board of this partnership. The board receives proposals for development from two groups, the Social Working Group and the Economic Working Group. The college is represented on all three bodies.

Key factors in the success of the original Employers Forum concept were the:

- active participation of Darlington's MP
- desire of local companies to campaign against the loss of Protected Area Status
- willingness, at the time, of Darlington Borough Council to delegate a high level of responsibility to the Forum
- willingness of organisations (such as Darlington Business Venture, Darlington College of Technology) to take on a role
- availability of funds to support a full-time officer for the project.

Gateshead College: FE's role in regional forums

Winning friends and influencing people

David Cheetham, Deputy Principal at Gateshead College, outlines the proactive approach taken by the college to secure a strategic role in economic development. To achieve its mission, to establish lifelong learning through regional regeneration, it sought membership of local planning forums.

The college

Gateshead College, a general FE college, is located in the north-east of England in an area which has undergone major industrial and economic transformation following the collapse of high employment industries such as coal-mining, ship-building and steel-making. Unlike some regions, it has combatted this decline by attracting various significant inward investors and creating an extensive support infrastructure to assist existing and new businesses.

Forging effective partnerships

A key feature of the northern region's successful economic regeneration strategy has been the development of effective partnerships involving the main contributors to economic development. However, unlike the universities in the region, the further education colleges have not been involved in policy formulation and have played a mainly reactive role, only providing training support to serve the economic development process.

Before incorporation, the college relied upon the local authority's economic development team to represent its interests in local regeneration projects. The rapid development of the TECs, with their influence over local and regional economic development, created another bureaucratic interface for the college to penetrate. It was this lack of direct influence and distance from regional policy-making that gave the college the impetus to make this issue a top strategic objective, to achieve its mission.

Repositioning the college

The college's mission statement 'Lifelong learning: Regional regeneration' indicates the importance it attaches to economic development. For the past three years, the principal and senior management team have been collaborating, networking and forming strategic alliances with the key players in raising regional economic competitiveness to reposition the college within the region.

Like most European Union (EU) Objective 2 regions, the Single Programming Document (SPD) represents the most powerful mechanism to influence local and regional development.

To 'break into the circle' of regional partners, the principal took the opportunity to represent the FE sector on the SPD's Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC). This group oversees the implementation of the SPD and brings together senior staff from the Government Office, the region's local authorities, Chamber of Commerce, TECs, universities, economic development agencies, local area partnerships (LAPs) and the voluntary sector. At the same time, the deputy principal joined Gateshead's local area partnership, a group of local organisations involved in sponsoring ESF and ERDF Objective 2 projects. It is responsible for producing local action plans and undertaking initial appraisal of projects prior to being submitted for funding by the SPD.

As a result of membership of the LAP, the college also gained membership of the Project Selection Group (PSG), the group responsible for approving ESF and ERDF projects on behalf of the PMC.

Raising the profile

The involvement of these two senior college managers in Objective 2 SPD activities has introduced the FE college's perspective to the region's most influential economic development activists. It has provided the opportunity to raise the profile of further education and awareness of the contribution it can make to regional human resource development. It has also led to invitations to join other influential support groups and networks: the principal to the Regional Steering Group for the PMC (the main policy development forum for the SPD), the North East Microelectronics Forum, and to participate in a major Raising Regional Competitiveness Project; the deputy principal to be an advisor for the development and implementation of the region's innovation and technology and business support strategies.

Responsibilities

Involvement in important regional economic development activity carries significant responsibility for the individuals concerned. They must represent the

best interests of the sector, act openly, and disseminate information freely to the various interested parties. Given the numbers of colleges within a region, it is not possible to involve every college individually in this type of strategic policy formulation. A formal mechanism to secure further education representation equitably is only now emerging through the regional offices of the Association of Colleges (AoC).

Positions and involvement tend to depend upon personal recommendations by those already involved. Those selected are expected to have something to say and contribute; involvement in these regional initiatives is certainly no free ticket to preferential treatment. Although there is no direct funding benefit from this type of networking activity, there are more long-term and indirect benefits from being a part of this network of people.

Power of networking

Having spent the past two to three years trying to break into this circle of influence, it has become clear that the network is quite small. Regardless of the issue in question, it is common to see the same representative from an organisation contributing to a range of regional strategy and policy development activity. Within the north-east, this group comprises only around 35–45 people. The college now finds the task of constructing collaborative projects much easier and is actively seeking involvement in other initiatives. FE colleges' involvement in raising regional competitiveness and developing the training infrastructure to support the region's rapidly expanding microelectronics industry is entirely dependent upon this networking and public relations activity. It is crucial that colleges in each region find sufficient common purpose to form strategic alliances to promote the sector as a whole.

There are three emerging and important initiatives which demonstrate more persuasively why colleges should be collaborating across their region.

The first is the new Government's University for Industry (UfI) initiative, which will bring together Government, industry and education in partnership, opening up opportunities for people to improve their skills and reach their potential. In the north-east, this network and partnership already exists and is negotiating to become the first pilot region in the UfI initiative. The UfI has the potential to transform how learners prepare for, and are supported in, employment. Colleges must seize the opportunity and ensure that FE is central to the development of this exciting initiative.

The second, the Government's New Deal, gives colleges an opportunity to demonstrate both their flexibility and maturity in working together. Three colleges in the north-east, Gateshead, Newcastle and South Tyneside, have formed a company to deliver Welfare to Work in the Tyneside Pathfinder area.

The third initiative is the Government's commitment to establishing regional development agencies as the first step to provide for effective, properly co-ordinated regional economic development, to underpin wider regeneration and to enable regions to improve their competitiveness.

Although RDAs are not expected to come into effect until April 1999, there will be significant regional politicking and manoeuvring among key players as they seek to gain advantage and influence within the proposed new structures for regional economic development. Given that the remit of RDAs includes co-ordinating training (including monitoring its effectiveness and ensuring that training and further education programmes reflect the needs of the labour market) colleges, and the FE sector in general, have every reason to 'win more friends and influence more people'. In the north-east, the colleges submitted a single response in the RDA consultation process and are now represented in the partnership preparing for the launch of the new agency.

Challenge for FE

The further education sector should not depend upon laissez-faire or individually-motivated approaches to furthering local economies. Instead, the sector should realise that it needs a strong and co-ordinated regional voice. To date, there is no mechanism for this to happen although the AoC is giving this matter urgent attention. Without immediate action, initiatives such as establishing RDAs and the University for Industry will be developed without reference to the contribution of FE colleges, and the opportunity to maximise the potential of local colleges to furthering local economies will again be lost.

3 Moving forward

KEY MESSAGES

The key messages which follow are grouped around the following categories:

- employment
- enterprise
- regeneration
- regional strategic planning
- developing college capacity.

Employment

- Long-term relationships with major customers can result in a shared problem-solving approach to new business or training concerns.
- Colleges play a key role in the transitional stages of people's lives, for example, from public to private sector employment, from the defence industry to civilian life, from school to work.
- Colleges can play a key role in mediating the administrative complexities of, for example, Modern Apprenticeships to support employers' active involvement in training.
- Occupational sectors can adopt management qualifications to define the needs of operative, supervisory and senior management training, for example, in logistics.
- Human resource development impacts on the total organisation and its working practices.

Enterprise

- Colleges can provide training for individuals to support the development of micro enterprises.
- Meeting the identified needs for one initiative may reveal further skills requirements, for example, from boat-building to boat design.
- Regeneration may result from developments arising from local initiatives as well as from inward investors.
- Colleges may need to work collaboratively with other providers or buy in specialist staff or equipment to have the expertise required to deliver new learning programmes.
- Colleges need to be aware of the potential demand for new skills resulting from new sector industries moving into the area (or expansion of existing ones). As the millennium initiatives described by Lewisham show, these skills may relate to cultural and heritage industries as well as to new technology.
- FE colleges can bring together local businesses and professional associations to forge stronger partnerships.

Regeneration

- New buildings create a high level of interest from employers and others. This should be exploited to maximise the use of the college as a resource for local businesses.
- Bringing people into a new college building for non-educational purposes may have spin-offs resulting in the take-up of training in the future.
- While a new college building can provide a significant number of local jobs, all colleges should be aware of their role as a stakeholder and consider how goods and services can be sourced locally.
- Local campaigns are required to promote learning to local employees – such as Lewisham's Employees Fair, poster and leaflet campaigns and launch of the initiative with major national figures – to make employees aware of opportunities at the college.
- Colleges can work with a huge range of partners in furthering local economies. Many of these will have access to a range of sources of funding or support.
- Partnerships which are initially formed to develop joint funding bids may be extended to consider further joint action.

Regional strategic planning

- Colleges should position themselves to be seen as the focus for the local community. Providing high quality education and training linked to state-of-the-art facilities will have a significant impact on the local skills base.
- Strategic approaches to regional development need to be founded on local partnerships and long-term plans, for example, Milton Keynes Economic Partnership has developed a Joint Economic Development Strategy.
- Public sector partnerships with the local council, NHS trusts and metropolitan police are a means of developing 'lifelong learning strategies' to enhance 'employability' of local employees.
- More open systems of decision-making, in terms of strategic planning and regional regeneration, should be developed.
- Colleges need to accept a corporate – that is, across the FE sector – responsibility for coming up with the goods. A more professional approach to interactions with policy-makers – operating above personal, or even sector, interests for the general good – needs to be promoted.

Developing college capacity

- Colleges must be alert to new staff demands resulting from redevelopment.
- Colleges need to be flexible to deliver training which may need to take place at irregular periods, for example, during wet weather or at unsocial hours.
- Cross-college functions, such as business development, marketing and client support services, are essential for enterprise development and supporting business partners.
- A long-term vision of future employment needs can lead the college to maintain sections of its provision to secure the future employment of the local workforce, for example, maintaining construction and motor vehicle work despite a decline in the industries.
- Providing the kit to network colleges via telematics could enable them to make a quantum leap in terms of the quality and appropriateness of the training they provide.
- Using Competitiveness Funds to create centres of excellence can steer colleges towards developing new skills to support economic regeneration.
- Colleges can successfully provide high quality education and training for large companies, such as BAe.
- Developing a separate identity, for example a business school, may result in an enhanced image of the FE sector. However, if the links to the parent organisation are not clear, the general image of the FE college will not improve.
- Colleges must make a concerted and, ideally, collaborative effort to move to the arena where key strategic decisions are taken.
- In the current climate, there is little opportunity for networking between colleges to share information on developing policy. The responsibility for disseminating information and gathering intelligence (on the part of those colleges involved in such discussions) needs to be clarified.
- Cultural change is necessary for colleges to recognise their role in regional economic development.
- Local labour market information can support strategic planning but it needs to be very detailed and specific to the community. A college-based market researcher can provide information on local employment patterns and long-term requirements.

POLICY ISSUES: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The final years of the decade, as we reach the millennium, will witness the emergence of a new regional structure for England, a new Welsh Assembly and devolution in Scotland. Regionalisation will have a direct impact on the role of FE in economic development. The following policy announcements and developments are laying the foundations for regionalisation:

- The White Paper *Building Partnerships for Prosperity*, published in December 1997, provides greater detail on the remit of RDAs and the structure and mechanisms for establishing them.

- Employment Zones offering a mix of training and work opportunities for the long-term unemployed have been established in five areas in Britain: Liverpool, Plymouth, South Teeside, Glasgow and North-west Wales. These zones will have a £33 million fund for employment partnerships between public, private and voluntary organisations. Activity will be based upon education and training initiatives to improve employability, support for self-employment and the wider community.
- The New Deal Pathfinder areas were launched in January 1998 with a national roll-out in April. They will offer unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds one of four options, to: take up employment with the private or public sectors; take part in full-time education and training; join an environmental taskforce; become involved in voluntary work. The success of the schemes will depend upon strong partnerships and well-orchestrated local delivery plans.
- The first 26 institutions to receive Kennedy funding to establish strategic partnerships to widen participation were announced in November 1997 (FEFC, 1997b). An additional £2 million has already been made available for the 1998–99 round of these partnerships (FEFC, 1997c).
- The report of the House of Commons Education and Employment Select Committee inquiry into FE, led by Margaret Hodge, MP for Barking, draws on evidence from Helena Kennedy and other groups and direct visits to colleges.

All of the above policy decisions are leading to a stronger regional base and a greater role for colleges in the local economy. It will be vital that colleges take a strategic role in preparing for RDAs to build upon current partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors. Colleges have a long tradition of working with their local communities and, as the FEDA research shows, are major stakeholders in their regions. College involvement in Competitiveness Fund bids, SRB activity, new ADAPT programmes (designed to retrain those whose jobs are at risk from industrial change), millennium initiatives and urban and rural regeneration programmes indicate that the sector has a central role in economic renewal and is the key to lifelong learning.

There is still a danger that this contribution will be at best marginalised or at worst overlooked. To counter this, efforts must continue to promote the image of FE colleges and support their developing role in furthering local economies. This needs to take place at a national and regional level, by organisations such as the AoC and FEDA, as well as the FEFC, and at a local level by the colleges themselves. Colleges must ensure that they have the capacity to meet their undoubted potential as stakeholders, strategic partners and service providers in the regeneration of the local and national economy.

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Acronyms

AoC – Association of Colleges

ABLE – Action for Better Lewisham Employees

APL – accreditation of prior learning

BAe – British Aerospace

BT – British Telecommunications

CMS – Certificate in Management Studies

DETR – Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions

DfEE – Departments for Education and Employment

DLR – Docklands Light Railway

DTI – Department of Trade and Industry

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

ESF – European Social Fund

EU – European Union

FEFC – Further Education Funding Council

FEFCW – Further Education Funding Council for Wales

GLA – Greater London Authority

GNVQ – General National Vocational Qualification

GTA – Group Training Association

HND – Higher National Diploma

HRD – human resource development

IT – information technology

LAP – local area partnership

LFS – Labour Force Survey

MA – Modern Apprenticeship

MBA – Master of Business Administration

MSc – Master of Science

NCN – Northern Colleges Network

NCO – non-commissioned officer

NTET – National Target for Education

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

PMC – Programme Monitoring Committee

PR – public relations

PSG – Project Selection Group

RDAs – regional development agencies

RDOs – regional development organisations

RTP – Regional Technology Plan

SCARP – Schools Crime Awareness and Reduction Programme

SEME – School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering

SME – small and medium-sized enterprise

SOLOTEC – South London Training and Enterprise Council

SPD – Single Programming Document

SRB – Single Regeneration Budget

TEC – training and enterprise council

TUC – Trades Union Congress

UfI – University for Industry

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2 Assuring quality in collaborative provision

FE matters

Developing regional strategies to train the workforce of the future is a key role for colleges. The future success of economic development depends on having a workforce equipped to cope in the modern workplace. Colleges need to ensure that the training and the skills development opportunities they provide will equip learners for the work environment of the 21st century. This publication presents case studies of good practice illustrating some of the ways in which colleges can contribute to promoting economic development in their region. It then draws out key messages from these relating to the sector's role in promoting employment, enterprise, regeneration, regional strategic planning, and developing college capacity.

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